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- 11 sleepers • W-L predictions
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- Depth charts, schedules, stats

**Darren
McFadden**
hogs Heisman
spotlight





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Florida QB
Tim Tebow

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You don't need another option: GO WITH USC

BY MATT HAYES

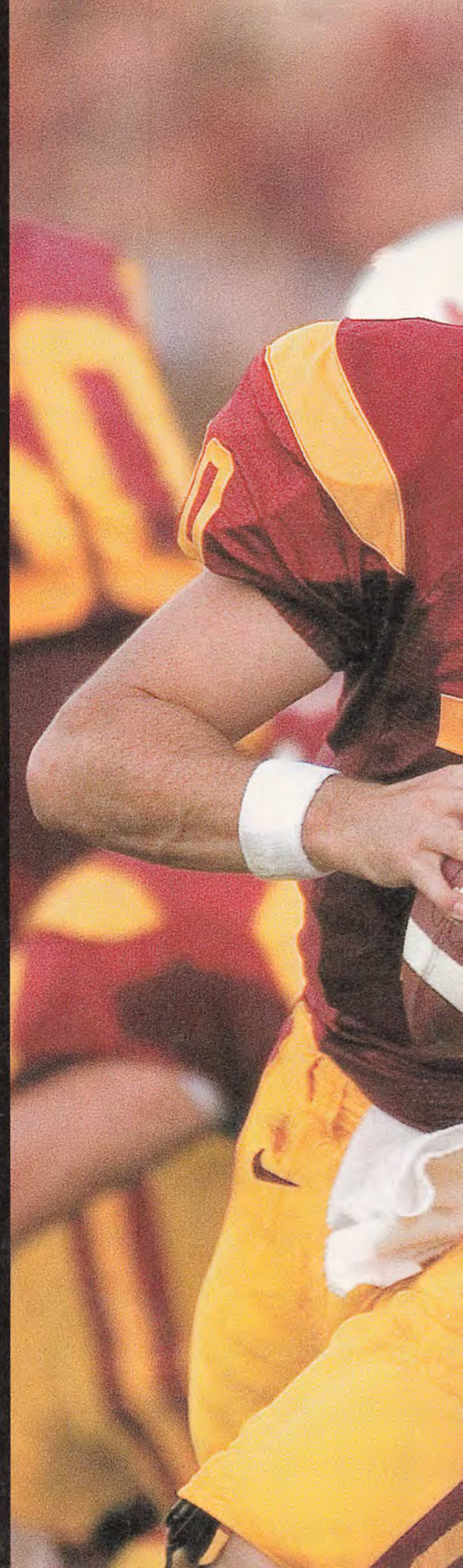
Yep, we're stubborn. While everyone else—OK, almost everyone—is gaga over the impact of the spread-option offense in college football, we're sticking with meat and potatoes and washing it down with a tall glass of talent.

We'll take USC and give you the board. And by the end of the season, the Trojans will be celebrating a national championship in New Orleans after beating the team they deserved to play in the title game that was played in that same city after the 2003 season.

Who says the BCS doesn't get it right? It might have taken four years, but maybe USC and LSU can resolve a long-unsettled disputed title by agreeing that the winner of January's BCS national title game gets the national championship the teams split in 2003, too.

"I'm all right with that," says USC quarterback John David Booty, a Shreveport, La., native and a true freshman backup on the Trojans' 2003 team. "Let's play for two."

Both USC and LSU have staunchly stood by their philosophy of a strong running game setting up the play-action pass—you know, the law of the land before guys named Rodriguez, Young and Meyer transformed the game with their funky new offenses fueled by dual-threat quarterbacks and tons of misdirection.





We've got USC and LSU playing for it all in January. Booty says he's OK with that.

But even USC and LSU have succumbed to temptation and tweaked their offenses—just a tad. Tigers coach Les Miles, the ultimate hard-nosed, my-guys-in-the-trenches-are-tougher-than-your-guys-in-the-trenches kind of coach, hired spread guru Gary Crowton away from Oregon in the offseason to be his offensive coordinator. Theoretically, Crowton will add some spread-option principles to supplement athletic quarterback Matt Flynn's game. We'll believe it when we see it.

And USC? Deep breath, everyone: The Trojans have added *shotgun* sets to the offense. No word yet if Booty, the classic pro-style quarterback, will be belly-feeding the zone-read play.

"Uh, doubtful," Booty says and laughs.

No kidding.

In this day, when everyone is trying to find their own version of Tim Tebow—a quick hint: there's only one Tebow—the teams that don't get fancy will be the teams crunching BCS numbers in December. Look at our remaining BCS conference favorites:

Big Ten: Michigan. The Wolves put the "P" in pro-style.

Big 12: Texas. After three years of zone read, the 'Horns are going back between the tackles with heavier, sturdier tailback Jamaal Charles.

ACC: Virginia Tech. Heavy, heavy doses of tailback Branden Ore and a wicked defense.

Big East: West Virginia. OK, three out of four ain't bad.

"It's a natural process as coaches to see how teams are successful and maybe use some of what they're doing," Miles says.

Or you can stay true to what you do and do it better than anyone else.

We'll take that and the most talented team in the country and see you in New Orleans when USC wins its third national title in five years.

There's nothing funky about that.

ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

OUR TOP 25

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. USC 12-0 | 14. Georgia 9-3 |
| 2. LSU 12-0 | 15. Penn State 9-3 |
| 3. Michigan 12-0 | 16. Auburn 9-3 |
| 4. West Virginia 11-1 | 17. Ohio State 9-3 |
| 5. Florida 11-1 | 18. Tennessee 9-3 |
| 6. Texas 11-1 | 19. Rutgers 9-3 |
| 7. Virginia Tech 11-1 | 20. TCU 10-2 |
| 8. Wisconsin 10-2 | 21. South Florida 9-3 |
| 9. Louisville 10-2 | 22. Boise State 10-2 |
| 10. UCLA 10-2 | 23. Nebraska 9-3 |
| 11. Florida State 10-2 | 24. Southern Miss 9-3 |
| 12. California 10-2 | 25. BYU 9-3 |
| 13. Oklahoma 10-2 | |

■ Complete rankings, pages 18, 20-21
■ Bowl lineup, projections, page 6

■ All-American teams and player rankings, pages 14, 16

HEISMAN WATCH

The Super Six of the Heisman Trophy race, and we've thrown in a guy from a non-BCS school, too—at no extra charge.

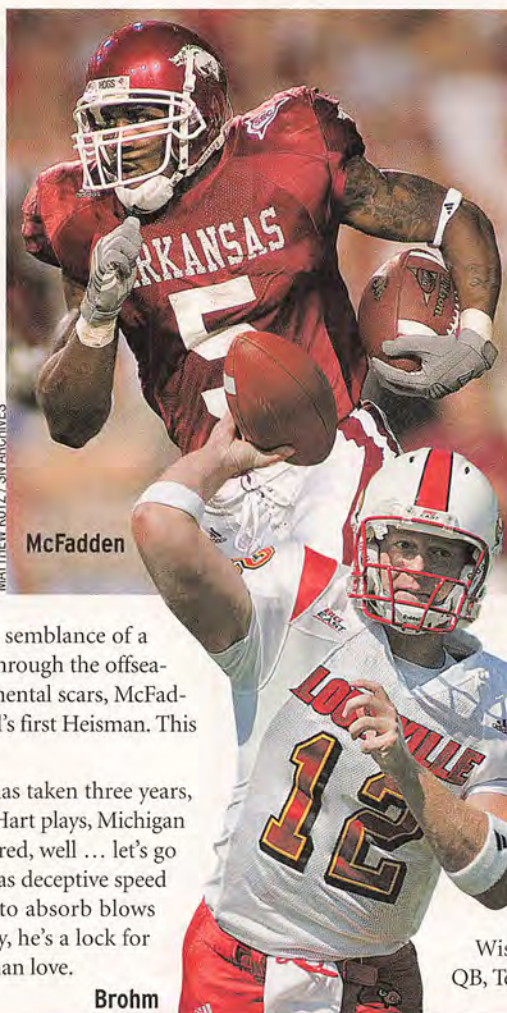
1. John David Booty, QB, USC.

When all else fails, use the previous season's bowl game as a barometer (see: Vince Young, Troy Smith). Booty threw for 391 yards and four touchdowns with no interceptions in the Rose Bowl against Michigan's stout defense. The USC staff says J.D. played "nearly flawless" in the spring. Yep, this has fourth USC Heisman winner this decade written all over it.

2. Darren McFadden, RB, Arkansas.

If the Hogs can replace three invaluable, hugely overlooked starters on the offensive line; if the Hogs can find some semblance of a passing game; if the Hogs can pull through the off-season soap opera without too many mental scars, McFadden will run wild and win the school's first Heisman. This just can't end that well, can it?

3. Mike Hart, RB, Michigan. It has taken three years, but this is painfully obvious: When Hart plays, Michigan can beat anyone. When Hart is injured, well... let's go back to the 2005 Alamo Bowl! He has deceptive speed and an Emmitt Smith-like ability to absorb blows and pinball away. If he stays healthy, he's a lock for 1,800 yards and a whole lotta Heisman love.



McFadden

Brohm

JAY DROWNS / SN

4. Steve Slaton, RB, West Virginia. The best pure runner in college football. Terrific speed, balance and vision. A tough, durable player who thrives in big games. Why won't he be a lock for the Heisman if the Mountaineers stay unbeaten? Because quarterback Patrick White—his uber-talented teammate—will get votes, too.

5. Brian Brohm, QB, Louisville. Say what you want about former Louisville coach Bobby Petrino's people skills, but his ability to get a quarterback ready and call plays made Brohm a star last season. Brohm clearly is the game's most polished quarterback, but the subtle nuances of a new playcaller and new system will change the dynamics no matter how talented he is.

6. Colt Brennan, QB, Hawaii. The sheer numbers are impressive, though there is some basis to the product-of-the-system argument. But the lack of a marquee team on the schedule is what will end this Heisman run before anything else. The schedule includes a boatload of WAC teams, a bad Mountain West team (UNLV), a mediocre Pac-10 team (Washington) and a I-AA school (Charleston Southern). Brennan could pass for 6,000 yards and 60 touchdowns and it won't matter.

Five on the cusp: DeSean Jackson, WR, California; Ray Rice, RB, Rutgers; P.J. Hill, RB, Wisconsin; C.J. Spiller, RB, Clemson; Colt McCoy, QB, Texas.

FIVE TOUGHEST SCHEDULES

1. Florida State

The facts: Road games against Clemson, Colorado, Wake Forest, Boston College, Virginia Tech and Florida; at home against Miami; Alabama in Jacksonville.

The naked truth: Seven of those eight games are away from Tallahassee. Had Bobby Bowden not gutted his staff, the 2007 schedule (with the same holdover coaches) could have been his undoing.

2. Notre Dame

The facts: Road games against Penn State, Michigan and UCLA; home games against Georgia Tech, Boston College, USC and



Bowden

Michigan State.

The naked truth: We all joke about the Irish's unofficial membership in the round-robin for the Commander-in-Chief's Trophy, but with this brutal schedule, the service academies are the difference between a bowl game in Jacksonville or a huge step back.

3. Florida International

The facts: Road games against Penn State, Miami, Arkansas and Kansas.

The naked truth: Does the Sun Belt schedule really matter? One more thing for new coach Mario Cristobal to worry about: Seven of the first nine games are on the road.

4. USC

The facts: Road games against Nebraska,

Notre Dame, California and Oregon; home games against UCLA and Oregon State.

The naked truth: The most talented team in the country is somewhere on this top five list every season. A tough conference schedule and at least two rough nonconference games every season.

5. Utah

The facts: Road games against Oregon State, Louisville, TCU and BYU; home game against UCLA.

The naked truth: The most talented non-BCS team doesn't have a chance of running this gauntlet. The Mountain West Conference is tough enough; winning one of these three nonconference games would be huge.

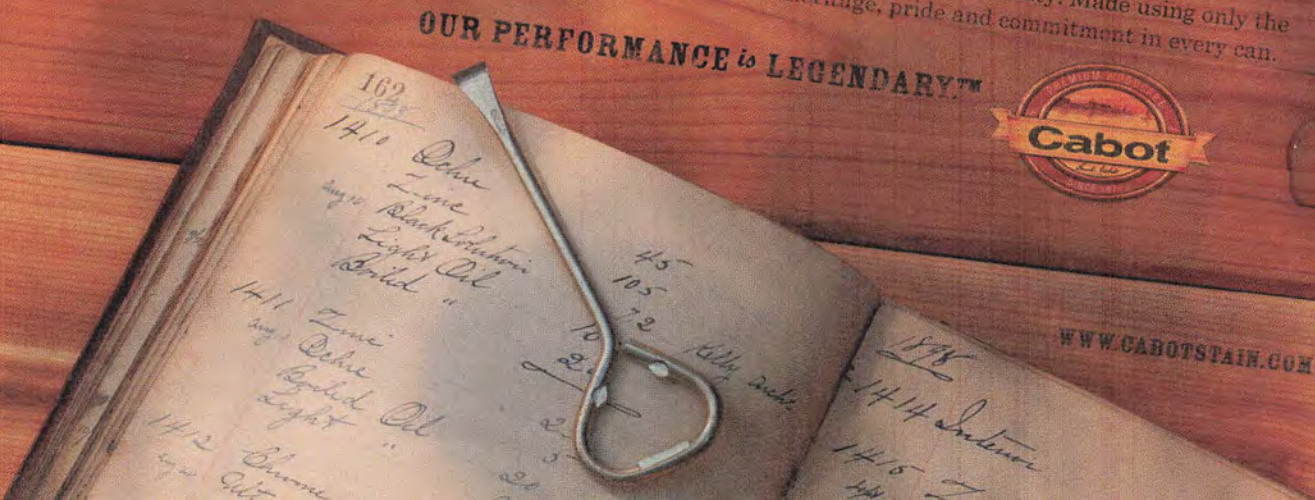
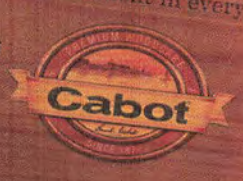


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BOWL LINEUP AND PROJECTIONS

Bowl	Date	Site	Time (ET), TV	Matchup	Tom Dienhart's matchups	Matt Hayes' matchups	SN projection
National championship	1/7/08	New Orleans	8 p.m., FOX	BCS No. 1 vs. BCS No. 2	USC vs. West Virginia	USC vs. LSU	USC vs. LSU
Orange	1/3/08	Miami	8 p.m., FOX	Bowl Championship Series	Virginia Tech vs. Louisville	Florida State vs. West Virginia	Virginia Tech vs. West Virginia
Fiesta	1/2/08	Glendale, Ariz.	8 p.m., FOX	Bowl Championship Series	Oklahoma vs. Florida	Texas vs. Louisville	Texas vs. Louisville
Sugar	1/1/08	New Orleans	8:30 p.m., FOX	Bowl Championship Series	LSU vs. Texas	Florida vs. TCU	Florida vs. Wisconsin
Rose	1/1/08	Pasadena, Calif.	4:30 p.m., ABC	Bowl Championship Series	Michigan vs. Cal	Wisconsin vs. UCLA	Michigan vs. UCLA
GMAC	1/6/08	Mobile, Ala.	8 p.m., ESPN	C-USA vs. MAC or WAC	UCF vs. Bowling Green	Southern Miss vs. Bowling Green	SMU vs. Western Michigan
International	1/6/08	Toronto	12 p.m., ESPN	Big East vs. MAC	Syracuse vs. Ball State	Pitt vs. Ohio	Maryland vs. Ball State
Capital One	1/1/08	Orlando	1 p.m., ABC	Big Ten vs. SEC	Wisconsin vs. Tennessee	Michigan vs. Alabama	Penn State vs. Georgia
Gator	1/1/08	Jacksonville	1 p.m., CBS	ACC vs. Big East, Big 12 or Notre Dame	Florida State vs. Notre Dame	Virginia Tech vs. Notre Dame	Florida State vs. Rutgers
Cotton	1/1/08	Dallas	11:30 a.m., FOX	Big 12 vs. SEC	Nebraska vs. Georgia	Oklahoma State vs. Georgia	Oklahoma vs. Tennessee
Outback	1/1/08	Tampa	11 a.m., ESPN	Big Ten vs. SEC	Ohio State vs. Auburn	Ohio State vs. Auburn	Ohio State vs. Auburn
Chick-fil-A	12/31/07	Atlanta	7:30 p.m., ESPN	ACC vs. SEC	Georgia Tech vs. Alabama	Boston College vs. South Carolina	Boston College vs. Alabama
Music City	12/31/07	Nashville	4 p.m., ESPN	SEC vs. ACC	South Carolina vs. Wake Forest	Tennessee vs. Miami	South Carolina vs. Virginia
Sun	12/31/07	El Paso, Texas	2 p.m., CBS	Pac-10 vs. Big 12, Big East or Notre Dame	Oregon vs. Texas Tech	Arizona State vs. Texas Tech	Oregon State vs. Notre Dame
MPC Computers	12/31/07	Boise, Idaho	2 p.m., ESPN2	ACC vs. WAC	Maryland vs. Boise State	North Carolina vs. Boise State	Clemson vs. Boise State
Armed Forces	12/31/07	Fort Worth, Texas	12:30 p.m., ESPN	C-USA vs. Mountain West	Tulsa vs. BYU	Houston vs. BYU	Houston vs. TCU
Insight	12/31/07	Tempe, Ariz.	TBA, NFL Network	Big Ten vs. Big 12	Iowa vs. Oklahoma State	Iowa vs. Missouri	Illinois vs. Texas Tech
Independence	12/30/07	Shreveport, La.	8 p.m., ESPN	SEC vs. Big 12	Kentucky vs. Kansas	Vanderbilt vs. Kansas State	Kentucky vs. Oklahoma State
Alamo	12/29/07	San Antonio	8 p.m., ESPN	Big Ten vs. Big 12	Purdue vs. Texas A&M	Penn State vs. Texas A&M	Purdue vs. Missouri
Liberty	12/29/07	Memphis	4:30 p.m., ESPN	SEC vs. C-USA	Arkansas vs. Southern Miss	Arkansas vs. Tulsa	Arkansas vs. Southern Miss
Meineke Car Care	12/29/07	Charlotte	1 p.m., ESPN	ACC vs. Big East	Boston College vs. South Florida	Clemson vs. Rutgers	Miami vs. South Florida
Emerald	12/28/07	San Francisco	8:30 p.m., ESPN	Pac-10 vs. ACC	Washington vs. Virginia	Oregon vs. Georgia Tech	Arizona State vs. Wake Forest
Texas	12/28/07	Houston	8 p.m., NFL Network	Big 12 vs. Big East or C-USA	Colorado vs. Pitt	Kansas vs. Cincinnati	Texas A&M vs. UTEP
Champs Sports	12/28/07	Orlando	5 p.m., ESPN	ACC vs. Big Ten	Miami vs. Penn State	Wake Forest vs. Illinois	Georgia Tech vs. Iowa
Holiday	12/27/07	San Diego	8 p.m., ESPN	Pac-10 vs. Big 12	UCLA vs. Missouri	California vs. Nebraska	California vs. Nebraska
Motor City	12/26/07	Detroit	7:30 p.m., ESPN	Big Ten vs. MAC	Minnesota vs. Miami (Ohio)	Michigan State vs. Miami (Ohio)	Minnesota vs. Miami (Ohio)
Hawaii	12/23/07	Honolulu	8 p.m., ESPN	Pac-10 vs. WAC	Arizona vs. Hawaii	Oregon State vs. Hawaii	Oregon vs. Hawaii
Las Vegas	12/22/07	Las Vegas	8 p.m., ESPN	Mountain West vs. Pac-10	TCU vs. Oregon State	Utah vs. Arizona	New Mexico vs. Arizona
New Mexico	12/22/07	Albuquerque, N.M.	4:30 p.m., ESPN	Mountain West vs. WAC	New Mexico vs. Nevada	New Mexico vs. Fresno State	BYU vs. Nevada
Papajohns.com	12/22/07	Birmingham, Ala.	1 p.m., ESPN2	Big East vs. C-USA	Rutgers vs. Houston	South Florida vs. Marshall	Pitt vs. Tulsa
New Orleans	12/21/07	New Orleans	8 p.m., ESPN2	Sun Belt vs. C-USA	Troy vs. Marshall	Troy vs. UCF	Troy vs. UCF
Poinsettia	12/20/07	San Diego	9 p.m., ESPN	Mountain West vs. at-large or Navy	Utah vs. Navy	Wyoming vs. Navy	Utah vs. Navy

NOTES: Times and dates subject to change. Matchups that do not reflect conference affiliations are based on projected bowl eligibility.

YOU SNOOZE, YOU ... WIN? LOOK OUT FOR THESE SLEEPERS

Your momma can tell you that USC, LSU, Michigan, Texas, Oklahoma and Virginia Tech will be good. But who are the sleepers, the teams shut out from bowls last year that will rise in 2007? Here's one possibility from each league. —Tom Dienhart

ACC: Virginia. Al Groh knew there would be growing pains last year. Now, watch the Cavs flex their muscles. All of that young talent—led by quarterback Jameel Sewell—is poised to blossom and it will move Groh from the hot seat to the cat bird's seat.

Big East: Syracuse. Go ahead, kick the Orange. Everyone else has. But Greg Robinson is ready to kick back. Why the optimism? Syracuse has found a quarterback—finally—in Andrew Robinson.

Big Ten: Indiana. This could be the feel-good story of the season, as the beleaguered Hoosiers reach their first bowl since 1993 to honor ailing coach Terry Hoeggner. Somebody call Hollywood.

Big 12: Kansas. Go ahead, ignore the Jayhawks. It's easy to do. But you'll pay for it. Mark Mangino has set the foundation of a strong program. The time—and schedule—are right for KU to challenge for the Big 12 North crown.

C-USA: Memphis. Youth was served last year, and it ate up the Tigers. But all of the experience will pay dividends this fall for what has been one of

the league's bellwether teams in recent years.

MAC: Ball State. Brady Hoke is one of the best coaches you've never heard of. He's a hard-nosed sort whose team reflects that quality. And there's enough talent for the Cardinals to be a premier team. The key: defense.

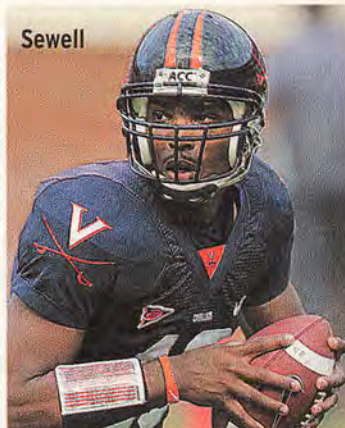
MWC: Colorado State. Word is that Sonny Lubick might soon retire. If this is his last season, he's primed to go out on a high note with a veteran team led by the return of star running back Kyle Bell from injury.

Pac-10: Washington. Don't be shocked if the Huskies break through to their first bowl since 2002. There's more talent than you think, headed by promising redshirt freshman Jake Locker, the Pac-10's next star quarterback.

SEC: Vanderbilt. Finish telling those Vandy jokes because they're about to become obsolete. This looks like the ever-polite Bobby Johnson's best edition yet in Nashville. Check out the pass-catch duo of Chris Nickson and Earl Bennett. Nice.

Sun Belt: Louisiana-Monroe. The offense will be among the best in the league. The defense? That will determine if sage coach Charlie Weatherbie has something brewing.

WAC: New Mexico State. Sound the air raid alarm and run for cover. Hal Mumme is back, baby! Thank talented quarterback Chase Holbrook, who will throw to a bevy of good receivers. Defense? Who cares? This is gonna be fun.



Sewell



Holbrook

NEW MEXICO STATE

GOTTA SEE GAMES

Virginia Tech at LSU, Sept. 8. In any other season, this could be a BCS game. In fact, it still could be in 2007, considering both teams are favorites in their respective conferences. This will be the toughest game LSU plays all season. Why? First-year starting quarterback Matt Flynn will have to deal with Tech's swarming defense.

USC at Nebraska, Sept. 15. The Huskers tried to play keepaway last year in Los Angeles, and it was, well, bad. This game—because it's in Lincoln—will be a true indicator of how far Nebraska has come. Or how far it still needs to go.

Florida at LSU, Oct. 6. Two years ago in Baton Rouge, LSU turned the ball over five times and still was fortunate enough to win. Last year in Gainesville, LSU

turned it over five more times and lost. Hey, fellas, with all that premier talent, how about a turnover-free game?

Wisconsin at Ohio State, Nov. 3. This game is the beginning of a key stretch of Big Ten games that could decide a spot in the national title game. The Badgers, oddly enough, have won the last three times they have played in Columbus.

LSU at Alabama, Nov. 3. Let's see: I'll jilt LSU and bolt for the NFL, then I'll come back and coach for the Tigers' bitter rival. And I'll get paid \$4 million a year, to boot! Welcome back Nick Saban.

Louisville at West Virginia, Nov. 8. Another Thursday night special, maybe another game of unbeaten. When, oh when, are we finally going to embrace the

beloved Big East?

Florida State at Virginia Tech, Nov. 10. And the Seminoles thought playing in The Swamp was tough? Wait and see how Lane Stadium rocks with a spot in the ACC championship game on the line.

Michigan at Wisconsin, Nov. 10. The winner takes the Big Ten (and maybe a spot in the national title game); the loser is a BCS at-large team.

UCLA at USC, Dec. 1. Rivalry games are funky and fierce and for whatever reason, they often follow strange trends. USC had won seven in a row against the Bruins before last year's loss that cost it a shot at the national title; the Bruins had won eight straight before USC's streak. Trust me on this: It's going to get dicey.

A CALENDAR OF UPSETS

Upsets are as much a part of college football as tailgating and marching bands. Here are a season's worth of upsets—56 if you're counting—that, if they happen, will turn stomachs and squash dreams. —Tom Dienhart

September 1

Oklahoma State over Georgia. A perfect coming-out party for star Cowboys QB Bobby Reid. Heisman dark horse, anyone?

Three more head-scratchers

SMU over Texas Tech (Sept. 3)
Central Michigan over Kansas
Toledo over Purdue

September 8

N.C. State over Boston College.

Boo him, cheer him, watch Tom O'Brien coach his new team to an upset. You shouldn't have let him get away, B.C.

Three more head-scratchers

South Florida over Auburn
Mississippi over Missouri
Vanderbilt over Alabama

September 15

Kentucky over Louisville. The suffering in this series has gone on too long for the Wildcats. Is Andre' Woodson the best QB in the state? Hmmm.

Three more head-scratchers

Washington over Ohio State
Utah over UCLA
Maryland over West Virginia (Sept. 13)

September 22

Iowa over Wisconsin. Not long ago, the Hawkeyes were where the Badgers are—a Big Ten elite team. This is Iowa's chance to turn the tables.

Three more head-scratchers

Arizona State over Oregon State
Arizona over California
Virginia over Georgia Tech

September 29

Illinois over Penn State. You can see this coming from miles away. Let's call this a statement game for the Illini's return to prominence.

Three more head-scratchers

Southern Miss over Boise State (Sept. 27)
South Florida over West Virginia (Sept. 28)
Purdue over Notre Dame

October 6

Duke over Wake Forest. It almost happened last year for a Blue Devils program that's better than you think—and a Wake team that's not as good as you think.

Three more head-scratchers

North Carolina over Miami
Kentucky over South Carolina (Oct. 4)
Arizona over Oregon State

October 13

Mississippi State over Tennessee.

The Vols are a listing ship in the SE(sea). And the Bulldogs' always athletic defense is ready to pounce.

Three more head-scratchers

Syracuse over Rutgers
Vanderbilt over Georgia
UNLV over BYU

October 20

Vanderbilt over South Carolina.

Tennessee fans will love this even more than Vandy fans. It's gonna be fun counting the times Steve Spurrier spikes his visor.

Three more head-scratchers

Washington over Oregon
Mississippi over Arkansas
East Carolina over N.C. State

October 27

Arizona State over California. It's

time for the old master (Dennis Erickson) to teach the young stud (Jeff Tedford) a few tricks.

Three more head-scratchers

Nebraska over Texas
Kansas over Texas A&M
Washington State over UCLA

November 3

Michigan State over Michigan. Is

there a better way for Mark Dantonio to announce his arrival in East Lansing?

We think not.

Three more head-scratchers

Baylor over Texas Tech
Colorado over Missouri
Connecticut over Rutgers

November 10

Syracuse over South

Florida. Hey, every dog has its day. And this one will belong to Greg Robinson. Will it be enough to save his job?

Three more head-scratchers

California over USC
South Carolina over Florida
North Carolina over N.C. State

November 17

Texas Tech over

Oklahoma. The Sooners claim they were robbed the last time in Lubbock.

Well, this time, they're going to get beat fair and square. And it'll hurt.

Three more head-scratchers

Minnesota over Wisconsin
South Florida over Louisville
Indiana over Purdue

November 24

Virginia over Virginia

Tech. A two-for-one deal: The Cavs ruin the Hokies' season while punching their ticket to a decent bowl game.

Three more head-scratchers

Kentucky over Tennessee
Georgia Tech over Georgia
Pitt over South Florida

December 1

Army over Navy. There's a new coach and new

era at West Point. That means it's time to sink the high-flying Middies.

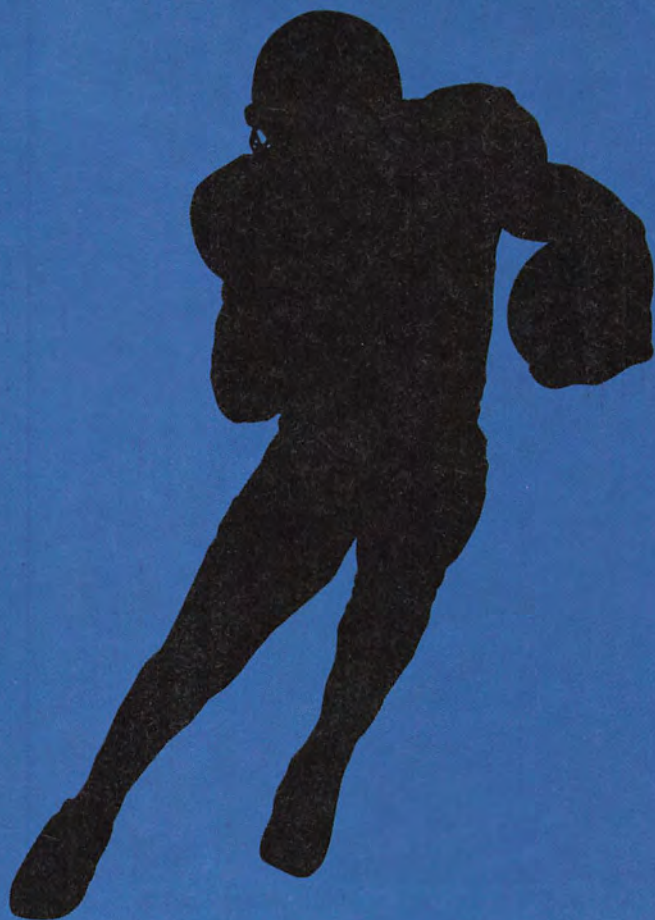
Three more head-scratchers

Washington over Hawaii
Pitt over West Virginia
Florida Atlantic over Troy



OKLAHOMA STATE

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LSU D-linemen (left to right): Marlon Favorite, Tremaine Johnson, Rahim Alem, Tyson Jackson, Charles Alexander, Glenn Dorsey.

UNIT RANKINGS

Beware LSU's defensive line. It's good. No, wait: It's great. And this band of brothers is a major reason many on the Bayou are thinking national championship. Three starters are back for a group that's headlined by standout tackle Glenn Dorsey, who considered turning pro early after helping LSU's defense rank No. 1 in SEC and No. 3 in the nation last year.

"Him staying is big," says an SEC coach. "He's a beast inside."

The LSU defensive line isn't the only unit drawing attention. Our breakdown of other stand-out units:

OFFENSE

Backfields

1. West Virginia
2. Michigan
3. Texas
4. Texas A&M
5. USC

Five others: Boston College, California, Clemson, Georgia, Hawaii

Lines

1. USC
2. Oklahoma
3. Michigan
4. Georgia Tech
5. Maryland

Five others: Boise State, BYU, Oregon State, Rutgers, Wisconsin

Receivers

1. Texas
2. Penn State
3. California
4. Florida
5. Oklahoma

Five others: Hawaii, Louisville, LSU, Maryland, USC

DEFENSE

Lines

1. LSU
2. USC
3. Wisconsin
4. Texas
5. TCU

Five others: Arizona State, Auburn, Georgia Tech, Southern Miss, Virginia Tech

Linebackers

1. USC
2. Virginia Tech
3. Texas
4. Penn State
5. LSU

Five others: Boston College, Ohio State, Oregon State, Southern Miss, TCU

Secondaries

1. USC
2. Miami
3. UCLA
4. Penn State
5. Oklahoma

Five others: Auburn, Georgia, Rutgers, Virginia Tech, Wisconsin

PLAIN AS THE NOSE ON YOUR FACE

I may be an idiot, but even I can see ...

... **It's a new world for Florida QB Tim Tebow.** Just about anyone can throw a pass when everyone in the stadium is expecting a run. Let's see Tebow do it when it's third-and-long, the defense is dropping six or seven into coverage and he has to find a sliver of a space in a zone-blitz defense when his backside protection breaks down and a blitzing safety has him locked in. Whew! Now consider that scenario on the road against LSU. Good luck, Timmy.

... **Something's not right in Michigan.**

Let's do a little subtraction: Michigan loses seven starters from a defense that played lights out for 11 weeks and doormat in the two games that mattered most. Now, all of a sudden, the Wolverines are a legitimate national title threat? Michigan will score a ton of points with its thrill-a-minute offense, but there's going to be a bunch of 38-35 nail-biters unless the Big Ten is overhyped.

... **West Virginia QB Patrick White affects a game more than any other player in the**

country. He's an incredibly gifted runner who's as close to Vince Young as anyone can be; and like V.Y., he's a much better thrower than given credit for.

... **The Florida State defense hasn't been much better than the FSU offense of late.** The defense that defined those good-as-it-gets FSU teams in the 1990s has been shaky in recent years. Mickey Andrews' group lives off sacks and turnovers. Last year, the 'Noles were 93rd in the nation in turnovers gained and 66th in sacks. —Matt Hayes

NEWCOMERS YOU CAN'T MISS

True freshmen

Jimmy Clausen, QB, Notre Dame. The most-hyped high school recruit since Brock Berlin, and we all know how *that* turned out. Oddly, both are from small, lower-classification private schools.

Joe McKnight, RB, USC. Remember all those stud freshman tailbacks the Trojans recruited last season? Better go find another position or school, fellas. McKnight is the real deal and will be the nation's best freshman this season.

Torrey Davis, DT, Florida. The Gators are desperate for help on the interior, and Davis has the body and attitude to excel in the nation's toughest league.

Redshirt freshmen

Gerald McCoy, DT, Oklahoma. Many thought

the former mega-recruit was a bust because he didn't play last season. He still needs to learn the noseguard position, but the Sooners expect big things from the player who once was compared to Tommie Harris.

Jake Locker, QB, Washington. This exciting athlete with a big arm gives the Huskies their first legitimate dual-threat at the position since Marques Tuiasosopo. One difference: Locker is much more polished as a passer at this stage of his career.

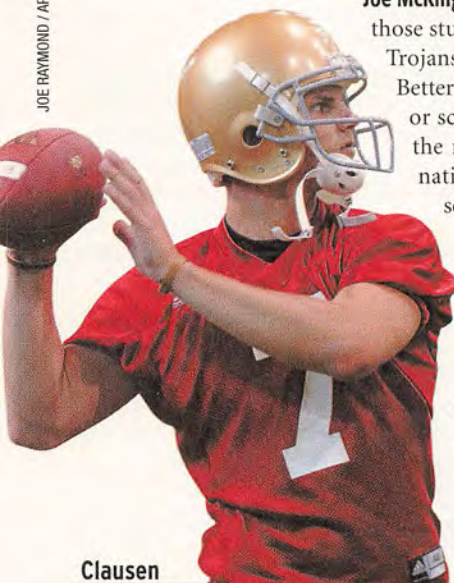
Darian Hagan, CB, California. The staff loves Hagan's aggressive attitude—getting beat doesn't bother him—and he has terrific makeup speed. Once he better understands the position and his responsibility in various zone coverages, he'll thrive.

Junior college transfers

Woodny Turenne, CB, Louisville. A big, physical corner who also excels in run support. He could move to safety if the rebuilt secondary needs help there.

Kenny O'Neal, WR, Tennessee. The Vols are thin at receiver and will rely heavily on O'Neal and at least two incoming freshmen. O'Neal has the physical frame to get off the jam at the line of scrimmage, something the freshmen will struggle with.

Gary Chandler, S, Kansas State. A big hitter with terrific speed, he quickly became a leader on the defense this spring. He also will return kicks.



Clausen

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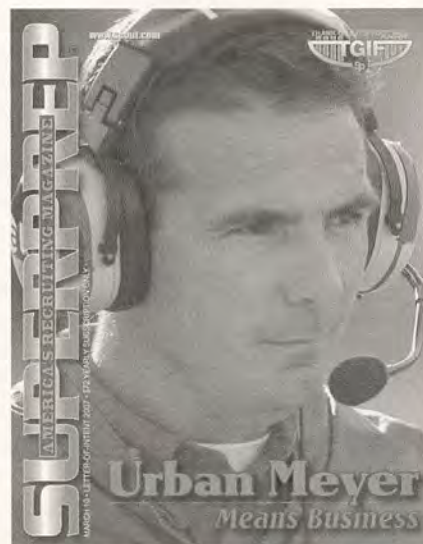
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GRADING THE COACHING HIRES

TEXT AND RANKINGS BY TOM DIENHART

Tom O'Brien, N.C. State. Sure, he has the pizzazz of a rice cake, but I challenge you to find a better coach. You can't, so don't try. And all it took to get O.B. out of B.C. was to pay the stoic one what he's worth. The days of sloppy football in Raleigh are over. **A+**

Nick Saban, Alabama. The dysfunctional Crimson Tide said they wanted to land a big whale. And Bama did land Moby Nick. Love him or hate him, you have to respect Saban's grid IQ. Bama's back, baby! **A+**

Steve Kragthorpe, Louisville. Sharp, bright, savvy ... you get the picture. Kragthorpe, one of the nation's hottest coaches, just happens to be taking over one of the nation's hottest programs. This guy is NFL material. **A+**

Todd Graham, Tulsa. This young, dynamic coach, who led Rice to success, is ecstatic to return to Tulsa, where he was defensive coordinator. He plans to install a West Virginia-type offense. Watch Graham flourish. **A**

Butch Davis, North Carolina. Kudos to UNC for jumping on Davis early. He showed his mettle rehabbing Miami in the late-1990s. And the situation at Chapel Hill is a whole lot better than the one in Coral Gables. **A**

Brian Kelly, Cincinnati. He's the ultimate dues-payer who has worked his way up college football's dirt road. Combine his know-how with an underrated program that has access to BCS bowls and, well, you know where we're going with this. **A-**

Top 5 coordinator hires

1. Jimbo Fisher, offense, Florida State
2. Jay Norvell, offense, UCLA
3. Sonny Dykes, offense, Arizona
4. Gary Crowton, offense, LSU
5. Larry Mac Duff, co-defense, Texas

Mark Dantonio, Michigan State. Think of Dantonio as a swift kick in the pants. And that's just what MSU needs. He'll inject much-needed grit, toughness and discipline into what has been one of the nation's slacker programs of the decade. **B+**

Troy Calhoun, Air Force. He comes from the NFL, but he's a Fisher DeBerry disciple who will retain the option-based scheme that makes the Falcons dangerous. And, most vital: Calhoun knows what he's up against. **B+**

Dennis Erickson, Arizona State. The football world let out a collective groan when this hiring was announced. No doubt, Erickson has baggage; he's perceived as a job-jumper who sometimes brings in unsavory types to do his work. But the bottom line: The guy can coach. **B+**

David Bailiff, Rice. He's Rice's third coach in three years. But the former I-AA Texas State coach already has connected with a leery alumni base, which is excited he'll retain a spread offense while implementing a 4-2-5 defense. **B**

Tim Brewster, Minnesota. Brewster was tabbed more for his gusto and promise than for his coaching acumen. Is it a gamble? You betcha. But it's one the Gophers had to take as the school preps to finish fundraising on a new on-campus stadium. **B-**

Butch Jones, Central Michigan. He has a history at the school, so the former West Virginia assistant knows what it takes to win here. **B-**

Mario Cristobal, Florida International. Having played and worked at nearby Miami, Cristobal is a young, dynamic coach who knows the terrain. That will help him recruit fertile south Florida and he stresses discipline. **B-**

Gene Chizik, Iowa State. He was itching for the chance to run a program. And, as Grandma always warned: Be careful what you wish for. Even if Iowa State scored a coup, does anyone really think Chizik will be around long if he has success? **C+**

Robb Akey, Idaho. The former Washington State defensive coordinator promises stability for a program that's on its third coach in four years. **C+**

Randy Shannon, Miami. It's no secret Shannon wasn't the first choice of athletic director Paul Dee. Heck, he wasn't even the second choice. But, in the end, Shannon got the job as much for his keen defensive acumen as for being in the right place at the right time. Big question: Can Shannon fashion an offense? **C**

Jeff Jagodzinski, Boston College. He cut his teeth as an Eagles assistant before matriculating to the NFL, where he was offensive coordinator for the Green Bay Packers. Don't expect any radical changes on either side of the ball, but the tempo will be quicker. **C-**

Neil Callaway, UAB. The former Georgia offensive coordinator wants to run a balanced attack that's built around the ground game. Bringing sage coordinator Kim Helton along will hasten the transition. **C-**

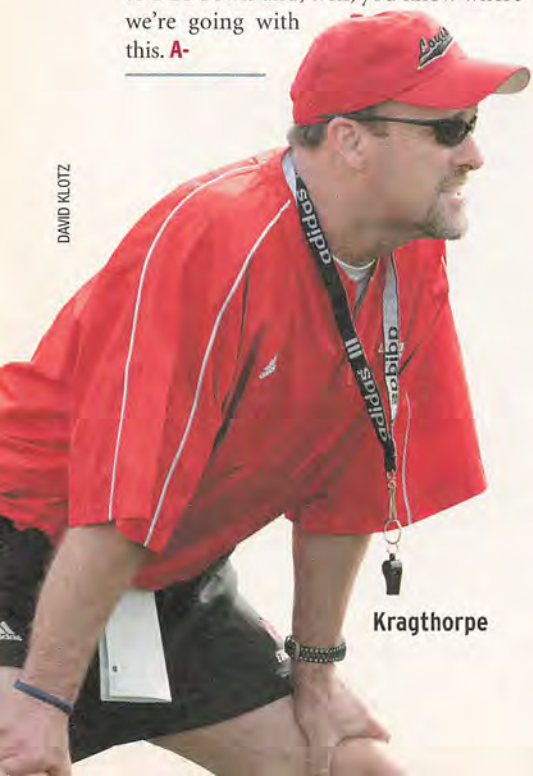
Derek Dooley, Louisiana Tech. The son of former Georgia legend Vince Dooley knows his football. He coached the last two years for the Miami Dolphins, but he knows the southeast from his days as an assistant at LSU, which will help in recruiting. **C-**

Todd Dodge, North Texas. A highly successful Texas prep coach at powerhouse Carroll High, Dodge will connect with recruits as he implements a pass-heavy attack. **C-**

Jim Harbaugh, Stanford. There are lots of reasons to be excited ... and scared to death. No doubt, Harbaugh has a marquee name that will score big with recruits, media types and boosters. But, can he REALLY coach? Harbaugh showed great promise leading San Diego. But that's a I-AA nonscholarship program. **D+**

Stan Brock, Army. For all intents and purposes, Bobby Ross forced Army to promote Brock from his offensive line post by retiring late in the process. Brock is a former NFL player and Arena League head coach, but he may be in over his head. **D-**

Bob Toledo, Tulane. Can you say "retread?" Lots of name recognition, but how long will he last? The old warhorse promises to build an attack similar to the ones from his days at UCLA. **F**



Kragthorpe

Ranking the BCS coaches

1. Pete Carroll, USC
2. Jim Tressel, Ohio State
3. Rich Rodriguez, West Virginia
4. Jim Grobe, Wake Forest
5. Bob Stoops, Oklahoma
6. Frank Beamer, Virginia Tech
7. Nick Saban, Alabama
8. Steve Spurrier, South Carolina
9. Dennis Erickson, Arizona State
10. Mack Brown, Texas
11. Kirk Ferentz, Iowa
12. Urban Meyer, Florida
13. Tom O'Brien, N.C. State
14. Bobby Bowden, Florida State
15. Tommy Tuberville, Auburn
16. Lloyd Carr, Michigan
17. Mike Bellotti, Oregon
18. Joe Paterno, Penn State
19. Butch Davis, North Carolina
20. Houston Nutt, Arkansas
21. Bill Callahan, Nebraska
22. Jeff Tedford, Cal
23. Mark Richt, Georgia
24. Jim Leavitt, South Florida
25. Mike Riley, Oregon State
26. Mike Leach, Texas Tech
27. Steve Kragthorpe, Louisville
28. Ralph Friedgen, Maryland
29. Bobby Johnson, Vanderbilt
30. Chan Gailey, Georgia Tech
31. Phillip Fulmer, Tennessee
32. Joe Tiller, Purdue
33. Greg Schiano, Rutgers
34. Al Groh, Virginia
35. Mark Mangino, Kansas
36. Brian Kelly, Cincinnati
37. Dennis Franchione, Texas A&M
38. Dan Hawkins, Colorado
39. Bret Bielema, Wisconsin
40. Rich Brooks, Kentucky
41. Les Miles, LSU
42. Charlie Weis, Notre Dame
43. Gary Pinkel, Missouri
44. Mark Dantonio, Michigan State
45. Dave Wannstedt, Pitt
46. Terry Hoepfner, Indiana
47. Tommy Bowden, Clemson
48. Karl Dorrell, UCLA
49. Ron Zook, Illinois
50. Guy Morriss, Baylor
51. Mike Stoops, Arizona
52. Mike Gundy, Oklahoma State
53. Bill Doba, Washington State
54. Ty Willingham, Washington
55. Randy Edsall, UConn
56. Sylvester Croom, Mississippi State
57. Ron Prince, Kansas State
58. Tim Brewster, Minnesota
59. Ted Roof, Duke
60. Pat Fitzgerald, Northwestern
61. Jim Harbaugh, Stanford
62. Randy Shannon, Miami
63. Ed Orgeron, Ole Miss
64. Jeff Jagodzinski, Boston College
65. Greg Robinson, Syracuse
66. Gene Chizik, Iowa State

UNTOUCHABLES

Five who can't be fired

Frank Beamer, Virginia Tech
Bobby Bowden, Florida State
Mack Brown, Texas
Joe Paterno, Penn State
Jim Tressel, Ohio State

YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL

Five best 45 and younger

Bret Bielema, Wisconsin (36)
Urban Meyer, Florida (43)
Rich Rodriguez, West Virginia (44)
Greg Schiano, Rutgers (41)
Jeff Tedford, Cal (45)

METHUSALAS

Five best 60 and over

Frank Beamer, Virginia Tech (60)
Dennis Erickson, Arizona State (60)
Ralph Friedgen, Maryland (60)
Steve Spurrier, South Carolina (62)
Joe Tiller, Purdue (64)

BEWARE THE COACH

Five most intimidating

Ralph Friedgen, Maryland
Al Groh, Virginia
Les Miles, LSU
Nick Saban, Alabama
Mike Stoops, Arizona

CALL THE MORGUE

Five most laid-back
Rich Brooks, Kentucky

Sylvester Croom, Mississippi State
Karl Dorrell, UCLA
Guy Morriss, Baylor
Ty Willingham, Washington

RODNEY DANGERFIELDS

Five most underrated

Jim Grobe, Wake Forest
Bobby Johnson, Vanderbilt
Brian Kelly, Cincinnati
Jim Leavitt, South Florida
Mike Riley, Oregon State

HOT AIR

Five most overrated

Lloyd Carr, Michigan
Dennis Franchione, Texas A&M
Phillip Fulmer, Tennessee
Les Miles, LSU
Charlie Weis, Notre Dame

SWEET TALKERS

Five best recruiters

Bobby Bowden, Florida State
Mack Brown, Texas
Pete Carroll, USC
Jim Tressel, Ohio State
Ron Zook, Illinois

DEEP THINKERS

Five best at X-ing and O-ing

Mike Leach, Texas Tech
Tom O'Brien, N.C. State
Mark Richt, Georgia
Rich Rodriguez, West Virginia
Jeff Tedford, Cal

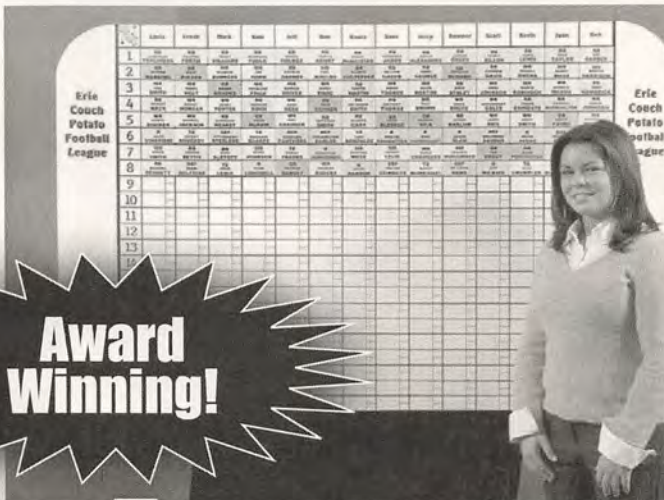
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PLAYER rankings OFFENSE

QUARTERBACKS

1. John David Booty, USC, Sr.
2. Brian Brohm, Louisville, Sr.
3. Patrick White, West Virginia, Jr.
4. Colt Brennan, Hawaii, Jr.
5. Nate Longshore, Cal, Jr.
6. Chad Henne, Michigan, Sr.
7. Andre Woodson, Kentucky, Jr.
8. Colt McCoy, Texas, So.
9. Chase Daniel, Missouri, Jr.
10. Matt Ryan, Boston College, Sr.

RUNNING BACKS

1. Darren McFadden, Arkansas, Jr.
2. Steve Slaton, West Virginia, Jr.
3. Ray Rice, Rutgers, Jr.
4. Mike Hart, Michigan, Sr.
5. Ian Johnson, Boise State, Jr.
6. Tashard Choice, Georgia Tech, Sr.
7. Yvenson Bernard, Oregon State, Sr.
8. P.J. Hill, Wisconsin, So.
9. Mike Goodson, Texas A&M, So.
10. Kregg Lumpkin, Georgia, Sr.

FULLBACKS

1. Owen Schmitt, West Virginia, Jr.
2. Brannan Southerland, Georgia, Jr.
3. Adam Ballard, Navy, Sr.
4. Peyton Hillis, Arkansas, Sr.
5. Brock Bolen, Louisville, Jr.
6. Tom Busch, Iowa, Sr.
7. Mike Cox, Georgia Tech, Sr.
8. Rich Belton, Wake Forest, Jr.

RECEIVERS

1. DeSean Jackson, Cal, Jr.
2. Mario Manningham, Michigan, Jr.
3. Jarrett Dillard, Rice, Jr.
4. Earl Bennett, Vanderbilt, Jr.
5. Adarius Bowman, Oklahoma State, Sr.
6. Davone Bess, Hawaii, So.
7. Mario Urrutia, Louisville, Jr.
8. Dorien Bryant, Purdue, Sr.
9. Sammie Stroughter, Oregon State, Sr.
10. Limas Sweed, Texas, Sr.

TIGHT ENDS

1. Martellus Bennett, Texas A&M, Jr.
2. Travis Beckum, Wisconsin, Jr.
3. John Carlson, Notre Dame, Sr.
4. Martin Rucker, Missouri, Sr.
5. Shawn Nelson, Southern Miss, Jr.
6. Anthony Hill, N.C. State, Sr.
7. Craig Stevens, Cal, Sr.
8. Tom Santi, Virginia, Sr.
9. Fred Davis, USC, Sr.
10. Darius Hill, Ball State, Jr.

TACKLES

1. Sam Baker, USC, Sr.
2. Ryan Clady, Boise State, Jr.
3. Jake Long, Michigan, Sr.
4. Barry Richardson, Clemson, Sr.
5. Jeremy Zuttah, Rutgers, Sr.
6. Phil Trautwein, Florida, Sr.
7. Kirk Barton, Ohio State, Sr.
8. John Greco, Toledo, Sr.
9. Tony Hills, Texas, Sr.
10. Andrew Gardner, Georgia Tech, Jr.

GUARDS

1. Will Arnold, LSU, Sr.
2. Jeremy Perry, Oregon State, Jr.
3. Andrew Crummey, Maryland, Sr.
4. Shannon Tevaga, UCLA, Sr.
5. Jordan Grimes, Purdue, Sr.
6. Sergio Render, Virginia Tech, So.
7. Matt Slauson, Nebraska, Jr.
8. Mike Fladell, Rutgers, Sr.
9. Robert Conley, Utah, Jr.
10. George Robinson, Oklahoma, Jr.

CENTERS

1. Jonathan Luigs, Arkansas, Jr.
2. Steve Justice, Wake Forest, Sr.
3. Alex Mack, Cal, Jr.
4. Marcus Coleman, Wisconsin, Sr.
5. Alex Wood, Louisville, Jr.
6. Doug Legursky, Marshall, Sr.
7. Kory Lichtensteiger, Bowling Green, Sr.
8. Cody Wallace, Texas A&M, Sr.
9. Kyle DeVan, Oregon State, Sr.
10. John Frady, Florida State, Jr.

SN All-American Offense

First team

Pos. Name, school

- WR DeSean Jackson, Cal (6-0, 166, Jr.)
WR Mario Manningham, Michigan (6-0, 181, Jr.)
TE Martellus Bennett, Texas A&M (6-7, 253, Jr.)
T Sam Baker, USC (6-5, 305, Sr.)
T Ryan Clady, Boise State (6-6, 319, Jr.)
G Will Arnold, LSU (6-4, 319, Sr.)
G Jeremy Perry, Oregon State (6-2, 313, Jr.)
C Jonathan Luigs, Arkansas (6-4, 305, Jr.)
QB John David Booty, USC (6-3, 210, Sr.)
RB Darren McFadden, Arkansas (6-2, 212, Jr.)
RB Steve Slaton, West Virginia (5-10, 195, Jr.)

Specialists

- K Art Carmody, Louisville (5-9, 165, Sr.)
KR Marcus Thigpen, Indiana (5-9, 182, Jr.)

Second team

Pos. Name, school

- WR Jarrett Dillard, Rice (5-11, 180, Jr.)
WR Earl Bennett, Vanderbilt (6-1, 202, Jr.)
TE Travis Beckum, Wisconsin (6-4, 221, Jr.)
T Jake Long, Michigan (6-7, 313, Sr.)
T Barry Richardson, Clemson (6-7, 330, Sr.)
G Andrew Crummey, Maryland (6-5, 301, Sr.)
G Shannon Tevaga, UCLA (6-3, 316, Sr.)
C Steve Justice, Wake Forest (6-4, 284, Sr.)
QB Brian Brohm, Louisville (6-4, 226, Sr.)
RB Ray Rice, Rutgers (5-9, 200, Jr.)
RB Mike Hart, Michigan (5-9, 196, Sr.)

- K Alexis Serna, Oregon State (5-8, 170, Sr.)
KR Darrell Blackman, N.C. State (5-10, 205, Sr.)

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September NFL Golden Game
Won '06 Jets (+6) Bills 28-20

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S16 Navy	(+1)	Stanford	37-9	W
O 1 Ravens	(+2)	Chargers	16-13	W
O 7 Arkansas	(+15)	'Bama	27-10	W
O12 Va Tech	(-42)	Bost Coll	3-22	W
O29 Cowboys	(+5)	Panthers	35-14	W
N11 Wake For	(+8½)	Fla St	30-0	W
N16 West Va	(-11)	Pittsbgb	45-27	W
N25 Wake For	(+1½)	Maryland	38-24	W
D21 BYU	(-3)	Oregon	38-8	W
D24 Saints	(+3)	Giants	30-7	W
J21 Bears	(-2½)	Saints	39-14	W

Okay, you know where this is headed.

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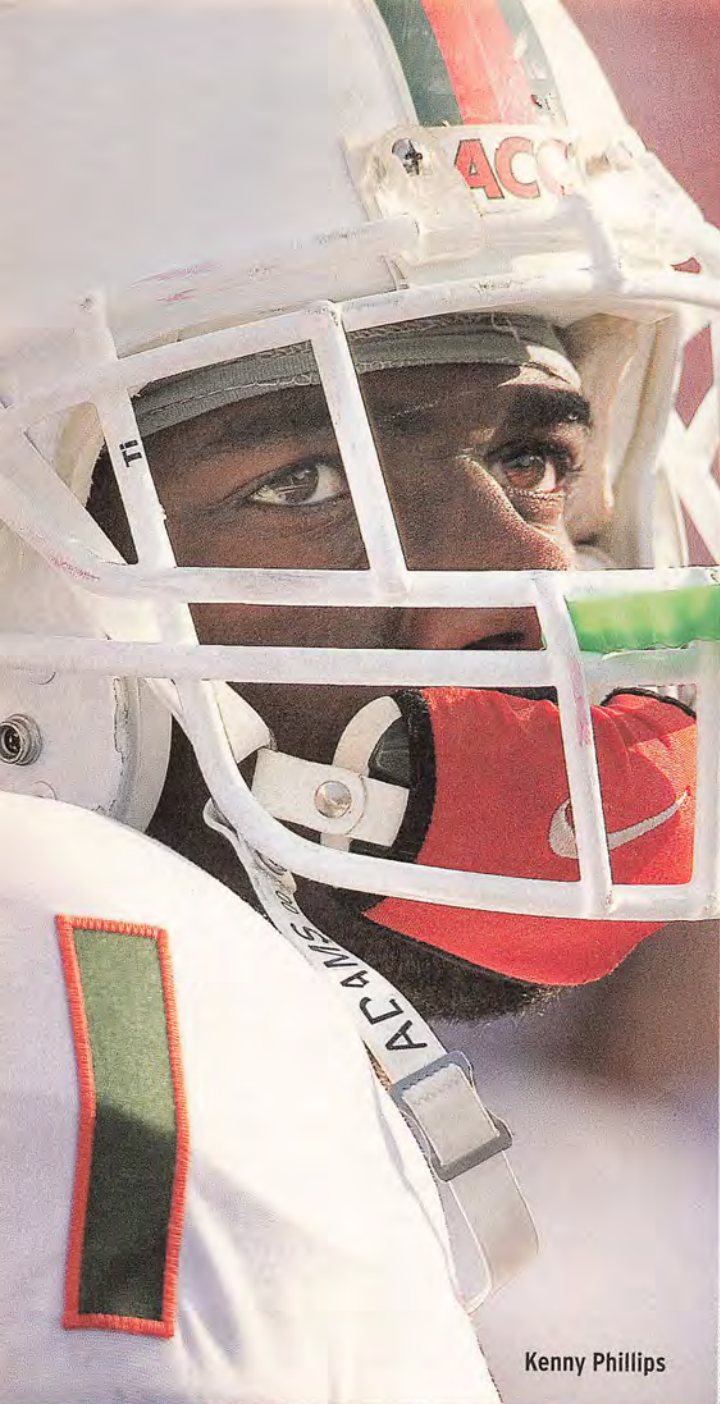
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JOHN DUNN FOR SN

PLAYER rankings DEFENSE

ENDS

1. Bruce Davis, UCLA, Sr.
2. Calais Campbell, Miami, Jr.
3. Derrick Harvey, Florida, Jr.
4. Lawrence Jackson, USC, Sr.
5. Tommy Blake, TCU, Sr.
6. Quentin Groves, Auburn, Jr.
7. Vernon Gholston, Ohio State, Jr.
8. Chris Long, Virginia, Sr.
9. Brian Orakpo, Texas, Jr.
10. Matt Shaughnessy, Wisconsin, Jr.

TACKLES

1. Glenn Dorsey, LSU, Sr.
2. Sedrick Ellis, USC, Sr.
3. Eric Foster, Rutgers, Sr.
4. Frank Okam, Texas, Sr.
5. Andre Fluellen, Florida State, Sr.
6. B.J. Raji, Boston College, Sr.
7. Dorell Scott, Clemson, Jr.
8. Jason Jones, Eastern Michigan, Sr.
9. Michael Marquardt, Arizona State, Sr.
10. Terrance Taylor, Michigan, Jr.

MIDDLE LINEBACKERS

1. Vince Hall, Virginia Tech, Sr.
2. James Laurinaitis, Ohio State, Jr.
3. Dan Connor, Penn State, Sr.
4. Jasper Brinkley, South Carolina, Sr.
5. Philip Wheeler, Georgia Tech, Sr.
6. Rey Mauluga, USC, Jr.
7. Jonathan Goff, Vanderbilt, Sr.
8. J. Leman, Illinois, Sr.
9. Prince Hall, Alabama, So.
10. Jason Phillips, TCU, Jr.

OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS

1. Keith Rivers, USC, Sr.
2. Erin Henderson, Maryland, Jr.
3. Bo Ruud, Nebraska, Sr.
4. Derrick Doggett, Oregon State, Sr.
5. Ali Highsmith, LSU, Sr.
6. Shawn Crable, Michigan, Sr.
7. Ian Campbell, Kansas State, Jr.
8. Malik Jackson, Louisville, Sr.
9. Ezra Butler, Nevada, Sr.
10. Alvin Bowen, Iowa State, Sr.

CORNERBACKS

1. Antoine Cason, Arizona, Sr.
2. Malcolm Jenkins, Ohio State, Jr.
3. Brandon Flowers, Virginia Tech, Jr.
4. Aqib Talib, Kansas, Jr.
5. Jack Ikegwuonu, Wisconsin, Jr.
6. Simeon Castille, Alabama, Sr.
7. DeJuan Tribble, Boston College, Sr.
8. Reggie Smith, Oklahoma, Jr.
9. Dwight Lowery, San Jose State, Sr.
10. Justin King, Penn State, Jr.

STRONG SAFETIES

1. Tom Zbikowski, Notre Dame, Sr.
2. Chris Horton, UCLA, Sr.
3. Jamar Adams, Michigan, Sr.
4. Tony Joiner, Florida, Sr.
5. Anthony Scirrotto, Penn State, Sr.
6. Jamal Lewis, Georgia Tech, Sr.
7. Tyrell Johnson, Arkansas State, Sr.
8. Myron Rolle, Florida State, Sr.
9. Dominique Barber, Minnesota, Sr.
10. Brandon Sumrall, Southern Miss, Sr.

FREE SAFETIES

1. Kenny Phillips, Miami, Jr.
2. Jonathan Hefney, Tennessee, Sr.
3. Quintin Demps, UTEP, Sr.
4. Taylor Mays, USC, So.
5. Airon Savage, Auburn, So.
6. Marty Tadman, Boise State, Sr.
7. Marcus Watts, Kansas State, Sr.
8. Louis Delmas, Western Michigan, Jr.
9. Josh Barrett, Arizona State, Sr.
10. Courtney Greene, Rutgers, Jr.

SPECIALISTS

KICKERS

1. Art Carmody, Louisville, Sr.
2. Alexis Serna, Oregon State, Sr.
3. Sam Swank, Wake Forest, Jr.
4. Ryan Succop, South Carolina, Jr.
5. Garrett Hartley, Oklahoma, Sr.
6. Connor Barth, North Carolina, Jr.
7. Taylor Mehlhaff, Wisconsin, Sr.
8. Jeremy Ito, Rutgers, Sr.
9. Chris Nendick, Northern Illinois, Sr.
10. Louie Sakoda, Utah, Jr.

PUNTERS

1. Britton Colquitt, Tennessee, Jr.
2. Chris Miller, Ball State, Jr.
3. Durant Brooks, Georgia Tech, Sr.
4. Andrew Larson, Cal, Sr.
5. Jimmie Kaylor, Colorado State, Sr.
6. A.J. Trapasso, Ohio State, Jr.
7. Matt Fodge, Oklahoma State, Jr.
8. Aaron Perez, UCLA, Jr.
9. Geoff Price, Notre Dame, Sr.
10. Justin Teachey, South Florida, Jr.

RETURN MEN

1. Marcus Thigpen, Indiana, Jr.
2. Sammie Stroughter, Oregon State, Sr.
3. Darrell Blackman, N.C. State, Sr.
4. Mikey Henderson, Georgia, Sr.
5. DeSean Jackson, Cal, Jr.
6. Reggie Smith, Oklahoma, Jr.
7. Felix Jones, Arkansas, Jr.
8. Derrick Williams, Penn State, Jr.
9. Eddie Royal, Virginia Tech, Sr.
10. Quan Cosby, Texas, Jr.

SN All-American Defense

First team

Pos.	Name, school
E	Bruce Davis, UCLA (6-3, 237, Sr.)
E	Calais Campbell, Miami (6-8, 282, Jr.)
T	Glenn Dorsey, LSU (6-2, 299, Sr.)
T	Sedrick Ellis, USC (6-1, 295, Sr.)
LB	Vince Hall, Virginia Tech (6-0, 240, Sr.)
LB	James Laurinaitis, Ohio State (6-3, 244, Jr.)
LB	Keith Rivers, USC (6-3, 230, Sr.)
CB	Antoine Cason, Arizona (6-0, 182, Sr.)
CB	Malcolm Jenkins, Ohio State (6-1, 202, Jr.)
S	Tom Zbikowski, Notre Dame (6-0, 210, Sr.)
S	Kenny Phillips, Miami (6-2, 202, Jr.)

Specialists

P	Britton Colquitt, Tennessee (6-3, 205, Jr.)
PR	Sammie Stroughter, Oregon State (6-0, 189, Sr.)

Second team

Pos.	Name, school
E	Derrick Harvey, Florida (6-4, 245, Jr.)
E	Lawrence Jackson, USC (6-5, 265, Sr.)
T	Eric Foster, Rutgers (6-2, 265, Sr.)
T	Frank Okam, Texas (6-5, 320, Sr.)
LB	Jasper Brinkley, South Carolina (6-2, 258, Sr.)
LB	Dan Connor, Penn State (6-3, 233, Sr.)
LB	Philip Wheeler, Georgia Tech (6-2, 230, Sr.)
CB	Brandon Flowers, Virginia Tech (5-10, 190, Jr.)
CB	Aqib Talib, Kansas (6-2, 180, Jr.)
S	Jonathan Hefney, Tennessee (5-9, 185, Sr.)
S	Quintin Demps, UTEP (6-1, 205, Sr.)

P	Chris Miller, Ball State (6-2, 205, Jr.)
PR	Mikey Henderson, Georgia (5-10, 150, Sr.)



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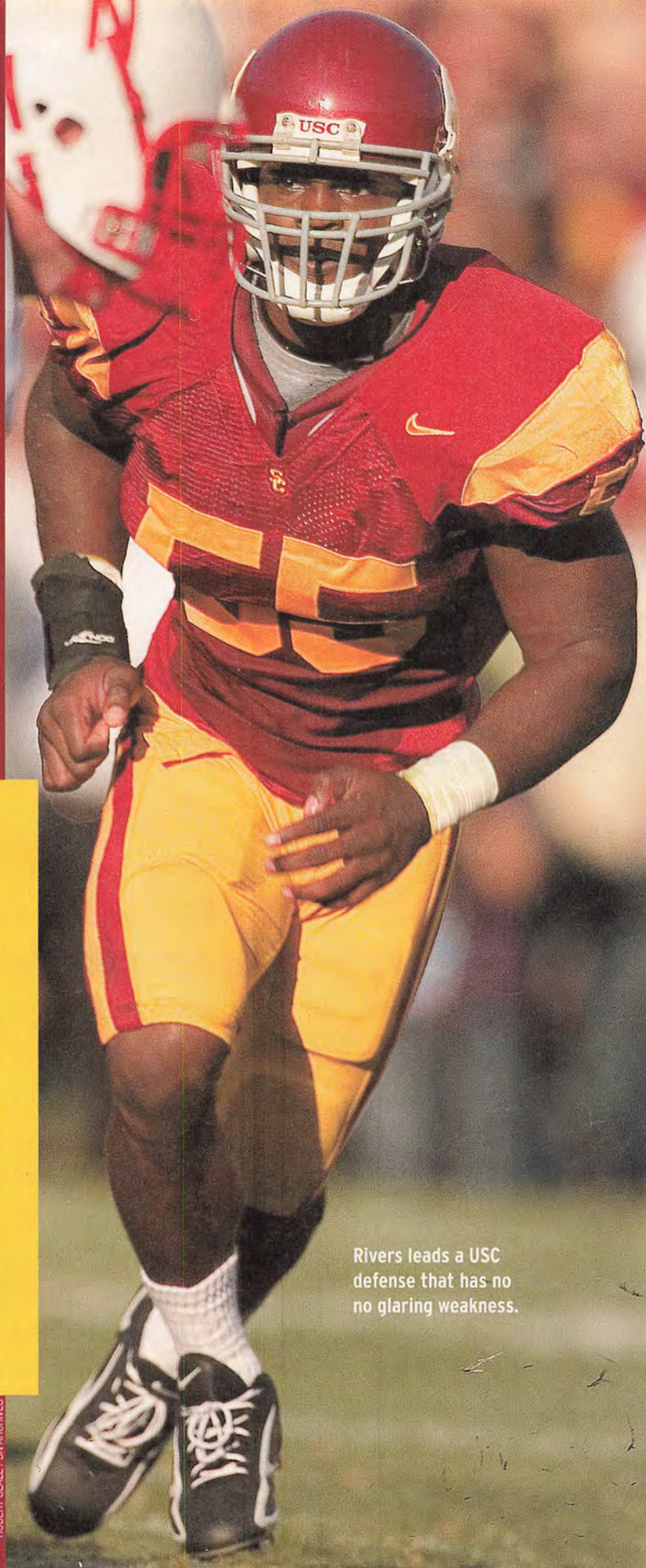


SN's TOP 25

1. USC

Go ahead, try to find a flaw with college football's 10,000-pound gorilla. There's quarterback John David Booty, linebacker Keith Rivers, offensive tackle Sam Baker, defensive tackle Sedrick Ellis. We could go on. Oh, you can pick a few nits here and there—mainly the lack of go-to receivers—but there's nothing major standing between the Trojans and a date with their third BCS title game in the last four years.

By TOM DIENHART



Rivers leads a USC defense that has no no glaring weakness.



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I have been a student of football as a player and later as a scout and recruiter in the Southeastern Conference. I have studied with and learned from some of the all-time greats - people such as the greatest college football coach in history, **Paul "Bear" Bryant** of Alabama, and later from **Hank Stram** who as coach of the Chiefs proved he had an analytical mind without equal as he won a Super Bowl and punched his ticket into the Hall of Fame. And I can never forget the lessons I learned from legendary Colt quarterback **John Unitas** and others such as Cowboy defensive end **Randy White** and the Rams all-pro wide receiver **Jack Snow**. **I learned the game from the best in the business.**

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9/17	AFC Game of the Year	50 Units	San Diego (-11) 40, Tennessee 7	WINNER!
9/23	College Game of the Year	100 Units	Louisville (-13 1/2) 24, Kansas St. 6	WINNER!
10/8	NFL Game of the Year	100 Units	Eagles (-2 1/2) 38, Cowboys 24	WINNER!

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WHEN KELSO STURGEON SAYS HE IS GOING TO WIN, YOU CAN BET ON IT!

2. LSU. New quarterback Matt Flynn will do his best Matt Mauck impersonation; he'll allow the galaxy of stars that surrounds him to make plays. The defense? It's big, fast and plenty good. Don't count out the Bayou Bengals.

3. Michigan. Yeah, yeah, the defense is being rehabbed. But have you checked out the offense? Awesome. If this indeed is Lloyd Carr's final season, he might be choreographing a grand send-off.

4. West Virginia. Sure, the defense is average—and sometimes even downright bad. But as long as Rich Rodriguez is diagramming plays for quarterback Patrick White and running back Steve Slaton, the Mountaineers will be deadly.

5. Florida. Lost amid the fanfare that surrounds quarterback Tim Tebow is the

fact these Gators have a lot of work to do on defense. Is that an Alfred E. Neuman "What, me worry?" look on the face of every Florida fan? Sure it is.

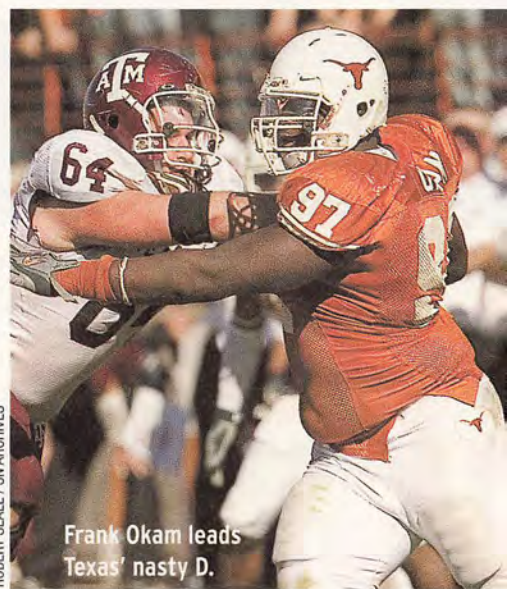
6. Texas. Same stuff, different year—the Longhorns, as usual, will be great. This season's hopes are pinned on an offense that features Heisman dark horse QB Colt McCoy throwing to a receiving corps that Mack Brown calls his best yet in Austin. Are you scared yet?

7. Virginia Tech. Feel like doing the Hokie Pokey? So does Frank Beamer after checking out his typically fast and nasty defense. But the music stops when Beamer looks at his quarterback situation. Finding the right guy will determine whether the Hokies are very good—or great.

8. Wisconsin. Saturdays figure to be even wilder in Madison—if that's possible. That's because the Badgers' defense might be the best in the Big Ten, and their offense is absolutely loaded. But there's one teensy-weensy problem: Who will be the quarterback?

9. Louisville. New coach Steve Kragthorpe got a big gift after taking the job: quarterback Brian Brohm opted to return for his senior year. Now, it's up to Kragthorpe to turn Brohm loose and duplicate the magic he performed at Tulsa.

10. UCLA. The defense showed great improvement in a 2006 season that still was a step back because of a sputtering offense.



ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

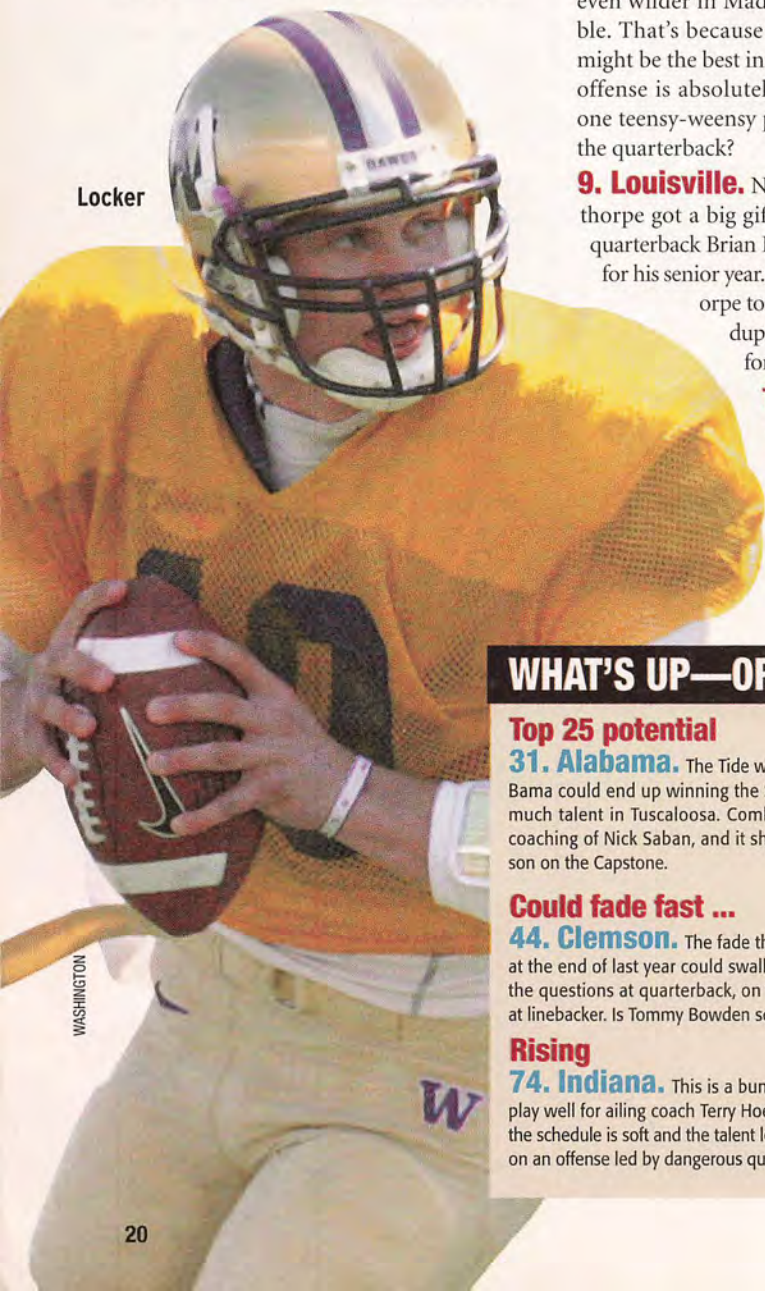
Frank Okam leads Texas' nasty D.

Now, with Jay Norvell running the attack, look for the Bruins to take two giant leaps forward in what could become a magical year for a veteran team.

11. Florida State. Remember when the Seminoles were the most feared program in America? Yeah, ancient history. Well, meet Jimbo Fisher, the new offensive coordinator/life preserver for legendary coach Bobby Bowden's listless program. Anything less than a BCS bowl will be a disappointment.

12. California. Is there a better pass-catching duo than quarterback Nate Longshore and wide receiver DeSean Jackson? And Justin Forsett looks like a capable running back. The questions are on defense. But that unit wasn't special last year—and the Bears still were golden.

Locker



WASHINGTON

WHAT'S UP—OR DOWN—WITH THESE TEAMS?

Top 25 potential

31. Alabama. The Tide will rise—quickly. In fact, Bama could end up winning the SEC West; there's that much talent in Tuscaloosa. Combine it with the uber-coaching of Nick Saban, and it shapes up as a fun season on the Capstone.

Could fade fast ...

44. Clemson. The fade that engulfed the Tigers at the end of last year could swallow them this fall with the questions at quarterback, on the offensive line and at linebacker. Is Tommy Bowden squirming yet?

Rising

74. Indiana. This is a bunch that's motivated to play well for ailing coach Terry Hoepfner. On top of that, the schedule is soft and the talent level is rising—especially on an offense led by dangerous quarterback Kellen Lewis.

Falling

30. Miami. There's a new, unproven coach and a muddled quarterback situation that clouds an already dysfunctional offense. And this drama will play out against the backdrop of a fickle, demanding fan base. Batten the hatchets, Sebastian.

Don't give up on ...

85. Washington. It wasn't long ago when U-Dub was the USC of the Pac-10. It could happen again for a program that showed life last year and has more talent than you think. Watch wunderkind QB Jake Locker shine.

Hopeless

98. Baylor. Guy Morriss has improved things in Waco. But the Big 12 South, the roughest and toughest division in football, will mask any tangible progress the Bears are able to make. Call 9-1-1. Now.

13. Oklahoma. Bob Stoops is coming off his best coaching job yet. What will he do for an encore? How about winning a BCS game? Sure, a steady hand is needed at quarterback, and the defensive line must develop. But, if we learned one thing last year, it's never to underestimate Stoops.

14. Georgia. Don't look now, but Matthew Stafford might be the best quarterback in the SEC. He'll have to be to cover for a line that's a work in progress and a defense that is longer on potential than proven commodities. But Mark Richt always has a way of making it all work. Woof!

15. Penn State. Last year, the defense was dynamite. This year, all signs point toward the fuse being lit on an offense that's ready to explode. The defense? It will be deadly again.

16. Auburn. After doing just enough to get by last season, the Tigers are ready to make a statement. At least that's Tommy

being said last year about the defense, and look where the Buckeyes ended up. By November, don't be surprised if this team is contending for the Big Ten crown.

18. Tennessee. Is it getting hot in Knoxville? You bet it is. Phillip Fulmer got the Vols back on track last season, but there's still a nagging fact that Tennessee hasn't won the SEC since 1998. And it won't happen this year unless the offense answers big questions at receiver and on the line.

19. Rutgers. It was a magical ride from the gutter to glory. Now comes the difficult part: maintaining a high level of play. The offense should pick up where it left off, but the development of the defense will determine the Knights' level of success.

20. TCU. The Horned Frogs have been knocking on the BCS door for years. A game against Texas means TCU's quest for a big-boy bowl almost certainly will be denied again. But TCU's always-strong defense almost guarantees a perfect run through the Mountain West.

21. South Florida. While everyone was giving hugs to Rutgers, West Virginia and Louisville last season, few notices were taken of the Bulls' strong run. USF is back—and better than ever. The team's M.O. won't change: a fast, undersized defense and a balanced offense led by underrated quarterback Matt Grothe.

22. Boise State. The feel-good hit of 2006 is back. Surely the Broncos can't re-capture their magic while breaking in a new quarterback. Go ahead and doubt innovative coach Chris Petersen. He loves it. And he knows he has enough skill on offense and talent on defense to be good again.

23. Nebraska. It's a question everyone is asking: Will Nebraska ever be Nebraska again? It could happen this year. The training wheels finally will be taken off the West Coast offense, and the defense is charged with athletic ability. Now it's

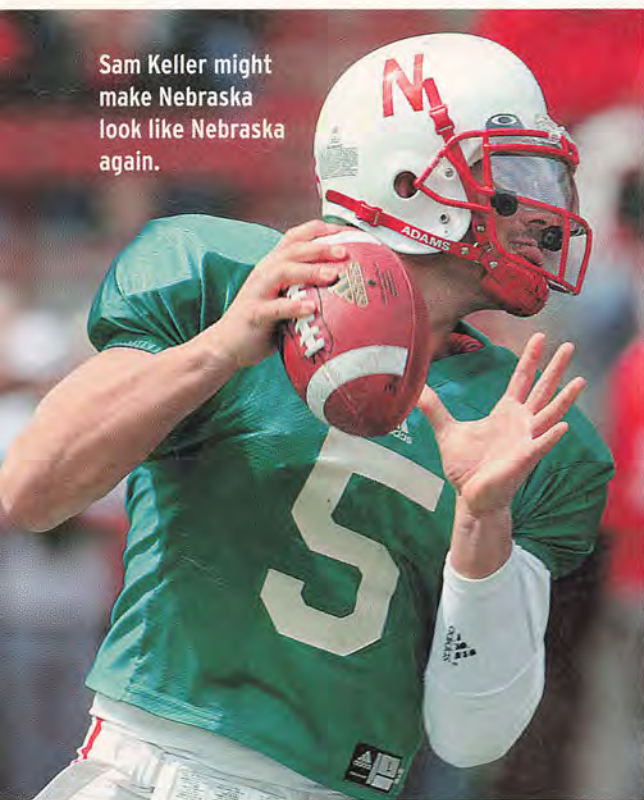
time to win more than just the Big 12 North.

24. Southern Miss. This is the closest thing to an SEC team outside of the SEC. Credit Jeff Bower, who always fashions a fierce defense that's built on undersized speedsters. There's more, of course, but that's enough to ensure that this will be one of the nation's premier non-BCS teams again.

25. BYU. The Cougars are close to duplicating their glory years, thanks to the astute work of coach Bronco Mendenhall. All eyes—as usual in Provo—will be on the quarterback. Max Hall is an Arizona State transfer whose nifty feet and strong arm might take your breath away.

THE REST: 26-119

26. Missouri	73. San Jose State
27. Texas Tech	74. Indiana
28. Boston College	75. SMU
29. Oregon State	76. New Mexico State
30. Miami	77. Marshall
31. Alabama	78. Vanderbilt
32. Hawaii	79. Washington State
33. Arkansas	80. Colorado
34. Iowa	81. Cincinnati
35. Texas A&M	82. Colorado State
36. South Carolina	83. Arkansas State
37. Georgia Tech	84. North Carolina
38. Oklahoma State	85. Washington
39. Notre Dame	86. Mississippi State
40. Purdue	87. Northwestern
41. Arizona State	88. Iowa State
42. Houston	89. Middle Tennessee
43. Virginia	90. Central Michigan
44. Clemson	91. Northern Illinois
45. Wake Forest	92. East Carolina
46. Kansas State	93. UTEP
47. Maryland	94. Louisiana-Lafayette
48. Kansas	95. Temple
49. New Mexico	96. Akron
50. Navy	97. San Diego State
51. Minnesota	98. Baylor
52. Oregon	99. Rice
53. Kentucky	100. Connecticut
54. Mississippi	101. Florida Atlantic
55. Pitt	102. Memphis
56. Arizona	103. Army
57. Illinois	104. Air Force
58. Miami (Ohio)	105. Syracuse
59. Utah	106. Tulane
60. Tulsa	107. Duke
61. Troy	108. Stanford
62. Western Michigan	109. Kent State
63. Nevada	110. UAB
64. Ball State	111. Louisiana-Monroe
65. Fresno State	112. Louisiana Tech
66. Ohio	113. North Texas
67. Bowling Green	114. UNLV
68. Toledo	115. Idaho
69. UCF	116. Eastern Michigan
70. N.C. State	117. Utah State
71. Michigan State	118. Buffalo
72. Wyoming	119. Florida International



Sam Keller might make Nebraska look like Nebraska again.

SCOTT BRUHN

Tuberville's plan. The defense should be pretty good. The key will be how the offensive line develops.

17. Ohio State. Don't weep for the Buckeyes. The offense was devastated by attrition, but that's the same thing that was

Projected finish

EAST

- 1 
- 2 
- 3 
- 4 
- 5 
- 6 

WEST

- 1 
- 2 
- 3 
- 4 
- 5 
- 6 

ASCENDING ^

South Carolina. No, we're not joking. If everything breaks right for the Gamecocks, they are capable of winning the SEC East. Steve Spurrier and his staff have recruited better than expected, and if Spurrier finds a quarterback to do his bidding, a breakout season might be in the offing.

SEC

Saban's return means Tide is ready to rise

The "Nicktator" returns to the SEC this season, and life in the West Division—heck, the entire league — just became a lot more interesting.

Nick Saban was hired as Alabama coach in January after spending two mediocre seasons in the NFL coaching the Miami Dolphins. Few—especially members of the media—were sad to see him leave Miami. But few in the SEC doubt that his presence with the Tide will make that program relevant again.

Saban had enjoyed success in five seasons as coach at LSU—including a co-national championship in 2003—before moving on to the Dolphins. And though he didn't enjoy big success with Miami, expectations are understandably high that he'll win big at Alabama as the replacement for Mike "At Least I Have a Good Coaching

Name" Shula.

Saban's return gives the SEC four coaches who have won national titles. Florida's Urban Meyer joined that elite circle last season, Tennessee's Phillip Fulmer won in 1998 and South Carolina's Steve Spurrier led Florida to a championship in 1996.

Plus, Auburn's Tommy Tuberville coached a 13-0 Auburn team that some say deserved a portion of the national championship in 2004. And then there are Ole Miss' Ed Orgeron and Georgia's Mark Richt, who were lead assistants at USC and Florida State, respectively, when those schools won national titles within the past decade.

Saban's return means Saturdays in the SEC will only get a lot more intense—and, yeah, interesting.



Saban's return gives the SEC four coaches who have won national titles.

BUTCH DILL / AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

DESCENDING v

Arkansas. The Razorbacks won the SEC West last season, but with all the offseason dust-ups caused by delusional Hogs fans, you'd think they were coming off a 2-10 campaign. The offense relies too much on tailback Darren McFadden, and the defense won't be as good as it was last season.



BOB LEVERONE / SN

Guys who change game plans

Glenn Dorsey, DT, LSU. This guy can control an offensive line from his spot—and not too many folks nationally can do that. Use only one blocker on Dorsey and chances are he's going to muck up the play. Use two and that lets other members of LSU's deep line take advantage of one-on-one blocking.

Percy Harvin, WR, Florida. Here's a prep stud who actually lived up to all the hype. Harvin touched the ball 75 times last season—barely more than five times per game—but the Gators wouldn't have won the national title without him. He is one of those dynamic players who is a legitimate threat to score every time he touches the ball.

Darren McFadden, RB, Arkansas. Just consider what this guy did last season for a team that couldn't really throw the ball—284 carries for 1,647 yards (that's 5.8 per pop) and 14 TDs. Plus, he threw three TD passes and returned a kickoff for a touchdown. Simply put, if you slow McFadden, you slow the Hogs. The thing is, every opponent knew that last year—and Arkansas still won 10 games and the SEC West title.

Coming back from injuries

Will Arnold, G, LSU. Arnold, a 2006 second-team all-SEC pick despite playing in just five games, had his season cut short by ankle and knee injuries. Though he missed spring practice, he should be the Tigers' dominant lineman.

Sean Bailey, WR, Georgia. After missing last year with a knee injury, this is Bailey's last chance to live up to his immense high school hype. He has 36 career catches; it wouldn't be surprising to see him surpass that total this season.

Marque Hall, DT, South Carolina. The Gamecocks were bad against the run last season. Hall, a junior, started the first two games before going down with a knee injury. If healthy, he'll be the Gamecocks' best interior lineman.



Arnold

BOB LEVERONE / SN

Newcomers to watch

Vince Vance, OT, Georgia. Vance, a sophomore junior college transfer, is huge at 6-8 and 330 pounds. He's scheduled to start on the right side of a rebuilt Georgia line but had injury issues in the spring. That's troublesome because depth could be a problem up front.

Larry Freeman, WR, South Carolina.

na. Freeman, a junior college transfer, is one of eight Gamecocks recruits who can play wide receiver. He enrolled in January and participated in spring practice—playing the position vacated by star Sidney Rice, who left early for the NFL. Coach Steve Spurrier has only one returning receiver who caught more than

All-conference

FIRST TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Earl Bennett, Vanderbilt (6-1, 202, Jr.)
WR	Keenan Burton, Kentucky (6-2, 195, Sr.)
WR	Percy Harvin, Florida (5-11, 181, So.)
T	Michael Oher, Mississippi (6-5, 325, Jr.)
T	Phil Trautwein, Florida (6-6, 298, Sr.)
G	Will Arnold, LSU (6-4, 319, Sr.)
G	Anthony Parker, Tennessee (6-3, 305, Jr.)
C	Jonathan Luigs, Arkansas (6-4, 305, Jr.)
QB	Andre' Woodson, Kentucky (6-5, 230, Sr.)
RB	Kregg Lumpkin, Georgia (6-1, 222, Sr.)
RB	Darren McFadden, Arkansas (6-2, 205, Jr.)

Defense

E	Quentin Groves, Auburn (6-4, 254, Sr.)
T	Glenn Dorsey, LSU (6-2, 299, Sr.)
E	Derrick Harvey, Florida (6-4, 245, Jr.)
LB	Jasper Brinkley, South Carolina (6-2, 262, Sr.)
LB	Jonathan Goff, Vanderbilt (6-4, 235, Sr.)
LB	Prince Hall, Alabama (5-11, 255, So.)
LB	Ali Highsmith, LSU (6-1, 226, Sr.)
CB	Simeon Castille, Alabama (6-1, 189, Sr.)
CB	Paul Oliver, Georgia (6-0, 201, Sr.)
FS	Jonathan Hefney, Tennessee (5-9, 185, Sr.)
SS	Tony Joiner, Florida (5-11, 217, Sr.)

Specialists

K	Ryan Succop, South Carolina (6-2, 213, Jr.)
P	Britton Colquitt, Tennessee (6-3, 205, Jr.)
KR	Mikey Henderson, Georgia (5-10, 150, Sr.)
SN All-American	

Players of the year

Offense: Darren McFadden, RB, Arkansas
Defense: Glenn Dorsey, T, LSU

SECOND TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Andre Caldwell, Florida (6-0, 198, Sr.)
WR	Early Doucet, LSU (6-0, 207, Sr.)
WR	DJ Hall, Alabama (6-3, 186, Sr.)
T	King Dunlap, Auburn (6-9, 321, Sr.)
T	Andre Smith, Alabama (6-4, 348, So.)
G	Robert Felton, Arkansas (6-4, 316, Sr.)
G	Herman Johnson, LSU (6-7, 351, Jr.)
C	Drew Miller, Florida (6-5, 297, Sr.)
QB	Matthew Stafford, Georgia (6-3, 237, So.)
RB	Brad Lester, Auburn (5-11, 191, Jr.)
RB	Keiland Williams, LSU (5-11, 223, So.)

Defense

E	Titus Brown, Mississippi State (6-3, 250, Sr.)
T	Josh Thompson, Auburn (6-0, 295, Sr.)
E	Antwain Robinson, Arkansas (6-3, 255, Jr.)
LB	Darry Beckwith, LSU (6-1, 232, Jr.)
LB	Jamar Chaney, Mississippi State (6-1, 236, Jr.)
LB	Jerod Mayo, Tennessee (6-2, 230, Jr.)
LB	Wesley Woodyard, Kentucky (6-1, 212, Sr.)
CB	Chevis Jackson, LSU (6-0, 190, Sr.)
CB	Captain Munnerlyn, South Carolina (5-9, 180, So.)
FS	Aairon Savage, Auburn (5-11, 191, So.)
SS	Reshard Langford, Vanderbilt (6-2, 215, Jr.)

Specialists

K	Joshua Shene, Mississippi (5-9, 170, So.)
P	Ryan Succop, South Carolina (6-2, 213, Jr.)
KR	Felix Jones, Arkansas (6-0, 202, Jr.)

Newcomers of the year

Offense: Larry Freeman, WR, South Carolina
Defense: A.J. Jones, LB, Florida

14 passes last season, so there will be playing time available. All Freeman has to do is learn the offense.

A.J. Jones, LB, Florida. Jones red-shirted last season as a true freshman because of an ankle injury; he would've been a backup for a depth-shy linebacker unit. He should start in 2007, and coaches

hope his incredible athletic ability means big play after big play from his outside spot.

Co-Eric Riley, WR, Mississippi State. Riley is one of seven junior college transfers signed by the Bulldogs, and they need his deep speed and athleticism to add oomph to a mediocre receiving corps.



BOB LEVERONE / SN

Gotta-see games

> Virginia Tech at LSU, Sept. 8

This might be the season's marquee nonconference game in the nation. If the Tigers lose, the grumbling begins anew about Les Miles.

> South Carolina at Georgia, Sept. 8

The Gamecocks need this one to have a legitimate shot at the SEC East title.

> Tennessee at Florida, Sept. 15

This provides a barometer of whether either is a legitimate league-championship contender.

> Auburn at Florida, Sept. 29

This is Florida's first of huge back-to-back games against SEC West powers. Auburn handed the Gators their only loss last season.

> Florida at LSU, Oct. 6

A home victory over the Tigers propelled the 2006 Gators to their national title. Can LSU turn the tables this season?

> Georgia at Tennessee, Oct. 6

This could be for the driver's seat in the SEC East race. Or it could be an elimination game in the division.

> Auburn at LSU, Oct. 20

The winner should be in good shape in the SEC West.

> Florida vs. Georgia in Jacksonville, Oct. 27

The annual cocktail party could end up crowning an SEC East champion.

> LSU at Alabama, Nov. 3

Too bad this isn't in Baton Rouge. Tigers fans could have had a fun time with Nick Saban.

> Alabama at Auburn, Nov. 24

Saban gets his introduction to the "Iron Bowl."

> Dream schedule LSU. "Dream schedule" is a relative term, but LSU won't be complaining too loudly. Yes, the Tigers play Virginia Tech, South Carolina, Florida, Auburn and Alabama. But only the Alabama game is somewhere other than Baton Rouge. In fact, there are no back-to-back road games—there aren't even any back-to-back tough games. Other than Virginia Tech, the nonconference schedule is a breeze.

> Nightmare schedule Georgia. There are no doomsday schedules this year in the SEC. But Georgia's might qualify as the most difficult to navigate.

Five games away from home, including contests against Alabama, Tennessee, Florida and Georgia Tech. Three tough home games against Oklahoma State, South Carolina and Auburn. Nine games in all against teams that went to bowls last season. And no home games in October.

> Bowl bound Nine teams went to bowls last season, but eight seems like a more realistic number this year. Alabama, Auburn, Florida, Georgia, LSU, South Carolina and Tennessee are locks. Either Arkansas or Kentucky will be the eighth.

Time to get it done

Leon Hart, G, Auburn. Hart, one of the nation's most highly recruited linemen in 2004, has started just two games in his career. This is his final shot—and it comes when the Tigers need to replace both starting guards (Tim Duckworth and Ben Grubbs) from last season.

J.T. Mapu, DT, Tennessee. The senior from Hawaii was very effective as a sophomore in 2003 before leaving on a two-year church mission to Houston. Mapu was very rusty—and ineffective—last year in his return. He is penciled in to start on a rebuilt defensive line.

Brandon Spikes, MLB, Florida. His monumental task is to replace Brandon Siler, the emotional leader of last season's defense. Spikes, who played sparingly as a highly touted true freshman last year, actually has more physical tools than Siler and runs extremely well.

Curtis Taylor, FS, LSU. Taylor, a junior with great size (6-3, 204), will be on the spot as he tries to replace four-year starter LaRon Landry. Taylor is a big hitter, and LSU coaches will be happy if he plays steady and mistake-free.

Guys who make game plans

ON THE HOT SEAT: Sylvester Croom, Mississippi State. Croom has won three games in each of his first three seasons and four conference games total. Granted, he took over a horrible program, but now he needs to show the program at least is on an uptick.

BEST COACH: Steve Spurrier, South Carolina. Spurrier put the Florida program on the map in the 1990s and has made Gamecocks football relevant in his first two seasons in Columbia. Blue-chip opponents now have to worry about losing to South Carolina.

BEST OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Spurrier, South Carolina. Spurrier and his staff have recruited some nice skill-position talent. If he ever gets a quarterback he truly is comfortable with, the Gamecocks could win the SEC.

BEST DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Mattison/Charlie Strong, Florida.

Defense was the reason Florida won the national title last season. These two coaches have meshed well despite having differing views on how to pressure a quarterback. Their skills will be tested this season with nine new defensive starters.

RIISING STAR: Bo Pelini, LSU defensive coordinator. This guy is the total package of NFL knowledge and big-time coordinator experience. Oh, and he's full of passion and intensity. Pelini often is compared to fellow Youngstown, Ohio, native Bob Stoops.

BEST STAFF: Auburn. Tommy Tuberville has a veteran staff, and both coordinators (Al Borges on offense, Will Muschamp on defense) have overseen some great units. Running backs coach Eddie Gran is the best at his craft in the SEC, and offensive line coach Hugh Nall is another proven teacher.



BOB LEVERONE / SN

> Who they don't play

Alabama: Florida, Kentucky, South Carolina

Auburn: Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee

Arkansas: Florida, Georgia, Vanderbilt

Florida: Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi State

Georgia: Arkansas, LSU, Mississippi State

Kentucky: Alabama, Auburn, Mississippi

LSU: Georgia, Tennessee, Vanderbilt

Mississippi: Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee

Mississippi State: Florida, Georgia, Vanderbilt

South Carolina: Alabama, Auburn, Mississippi

Tennessee: Auburn, LSU, Mississippi

Vanderbilt: Arkansas, LSU, Mississippi State

UNIT
rankings

	Backfield	Receivers	Offensive line	Overall	Defensive line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
Alabama	9	3	4	5	3	6	3	3	5	5
Arkansas	5	10	5	6	4	12	9	9	10	6
Auburn	7	9	8	9	2	5	2	2	9	1
Florida	6	1	1	2	9	7	8	8	7	2
Georgia	1	7	7	4	7	8	1	5	1	4
Kentucky	4	5	12	7	12	9	12	12	6	9
LSU	3	2	2	1	1	1	4	1	8	8
Mississippi	11	12	6	11	5	11	11	10	2	12
Mississippi State	12	11	11	12	10	3	5	7	11	11
South Carolina	8	6	10	10	8	4	6	6	3	3
Tennessee	2	8	3	3	6	2	7	4	4	7
Vanderbilt	10	4	9	8	11	10	10	11	12	10

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

Returning leaders

RUSHING Player, school, class	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.		
1. Darren McFadden, Arkansas, Jr.	14	284	1,647	5.8	80	14	117.6	5		
2. Felix Jones, Arkansas, Jr.	14	154	1,168	7.6	85	6	83.4	26		
3. BenJarvus Green-Ellis, Mississippi, Sr.	12	234	1,000	4.3	31	7	83.3	38		
4. Cory Boyd, South Carolina, Sr.	12	164	823	5.0	40	8	68.6	61		
5. LaMarcus Coker, Tennessee, So.	11	108	696	6.4	89	5	63.3	93		
PASSING Player, school, class	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1. Andre' Woodson, Kentucky, Sr.	13	264	419	63.0	7	3,515	13.3	31	154.5	9
2. Erik Ainge, Tennessee, Sr.	12	233	348	67.0	9	2,989	12.8	19	151.9	18
3. John Parker Wilson, Alabama, Jr.	13	216	379	57.0	10	2,707	12.5	17	126.5	28
4. Brandon Cox, Auburn, Sr.	13	163	271	60.1	9	2,198	13.5	14	138.7	53
5. Chris Nickson, Vanderbilt, Jr.	12	160	292	54.8	13	2,085	13.0	15	122.8	63
RECEIVING Player, school, class	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.	
1. Earl Bennett, Vanderbilt, Jr.	12	82	1,146	77	6	6.8	14.0	95.5	t9	
2. Keenan Burton, Kentucky, Sr.	13	77	1,036	73	12	5.9	13.5	79.7	13	
3. DJ Hall, Alabama, Sr.	12	62	1,056	78	5	5.2	17.0	88.0	t36	
4. Early Doucet, LSU, Sr.	13	59	772	58	8	4.5	13.1	59.4	t47	
5. Andre Caldwell, Florida, Sr.	14	57	577	66	6	4.1	10.1	41.2	t58	



Tennessee LBs
(left to right):
Rico McCoy, Eli
Wilson, Ryan Karl
and Jerod Mayo.

Recruiting buzz Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact	Diamond in the rough
1. Florida	DE Carlos Dunlap, 6-6/255	DT Torrey Davis, 6-5/280	CB Moses Jenkins, 6-1/170
2. Tennessee	CB Eric Berry, 6-0/180	DB DeAngelo Willingham, 6-1/180	DT William Brimfield, 6-6/315
3. LSU	WR Terrence Tolliver, 6-4/185	S/LB Chad Jones, 6-2/220	CB Delvin Breux, 6-1/180
4. South Carolina	WR Chris Culliver, 6-0/190	DE Travian Robertson, 6-4/255	DE Byron McKnight, 6-5/225
5. Auburn	RB Enrique Davis, 5-11/215	K Wes Byrum, 6-2/190	DE A.J. Greene, 6-4/240
6. Georgia	RB Caleb King, 5-11/180	DE Jarius Wynn, 6-5/270	WR Walter Hill, 6-4/215
7. Alabama	LB Rolando McClain, 6-4/240	DB Kareem Jackson, 5-10/182	TE Chris Underwood, 6-4/210
8. Mississippi	DE Chris Strong, 6-3/255	WR A.J. Jackson, 6-6/225	WR Lionel Breux, 5-11/180
9. Arkansas	TE David Williams, 6-2/240	LB Jermaine Love, 5-11/220	RB Juwan Franklin, 6-0/185
10. Mississippi State	OL Derek Sherrod, 6-6/300	WR Co-Eric Riley, 6-2/205	WR O'Neal Wilder, 6-5/200
11. Kentucky	DE D.J. Stafford, 6-3/260	DB Chris Drayton, 6-1/200	QB Matt Lentz, 6-3/205
12. Vanderbilt	DE John Stokes, 6-5/225	DB Jamie Graham, 5-11/175	DE Theron Kadi, 6-3/245

Rankings by Rivals.com

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
LSU	11-2	10-2	9-2	12-1 ^A	8-4	50-11
Georgia	9-4	10-2 ^A	9-2	10-3	12-1 ^A	50-12
Auburn	11-2	9-2	12-0 ^A	7-5	8-4	47-13
Florida	13-1 ^A	8-3	7-4	8-4	8-4	44-16
Tennessee	9-4	5-6	9-3	10-2	8-4	41-19
Arkansas	10-4	4-7	5-6	8-4	9-4	36-25
Alabama	6-7	9-2	6-5	4-9	10-3	35-26
South Carolina	8-5	7-4	6-5	5-7	5-7	31-28
Mississippi	4-8	3-8	4-7	9-3	6-6	26-32
Kentucky	8-5	3-8	2-9	4-8	7-5	24-35
Vanderbilt	4-8	5-6	2-9	2-10	2-10	15-43
Mississippi State	3-9	3-8	3-8	2-10	3-9	14-44

*Conference champ ^ANational champ



GATORS

Florida won the 2006 national championship in coach Urban Meyer's second season. Now, he'll try to do it again—with a new quarterback and nine new starters on defense. The non-conference schedule is easily navigable, but the SEC schedule is not. There's plenty of talent, but *nine* new starters on defense? Ten wins might be a more realistic goal.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY At its core, Meyer's version of the spread is simple: He tries to match his fast guys against the other team's slow guys and let them make big plays. Florida won it all last season without an every-down tailback and may not have one this season.

SKILL POSITIONS Wideouts Andre Caldwell and Percy Harvin are threats to score any time they touch the ball, whether it's on a flanker screen, crossing pattern, deep throw or end around.

Cornelius Ingram is listed as a tight end, but he's really a slot receiver with great hands and toughness. Big things also are expected from speedy Jarred Fayson and Riley Cooper, and several true freshmen could fit into the receiver mix as well. The guy in charge of getting them the ball is quarterback Tim Tebow, a phenomenon last season because of his running ability. Tebow has a strong arm but must show he can succeed in passing situations; his biggest pass plays last year came when opponents thought he was going to run.

The situation at tailback is a

Quick hits

Stadium: Ben Hill Griffin at Florida Field (grass, 88,548)

Site: Gainesville, Fla.

Coach: Urban Meyer (22-4, 2 years; 61-12 overall, 6 years).

Offensive coordinator: Dan Mullen (3rd year)

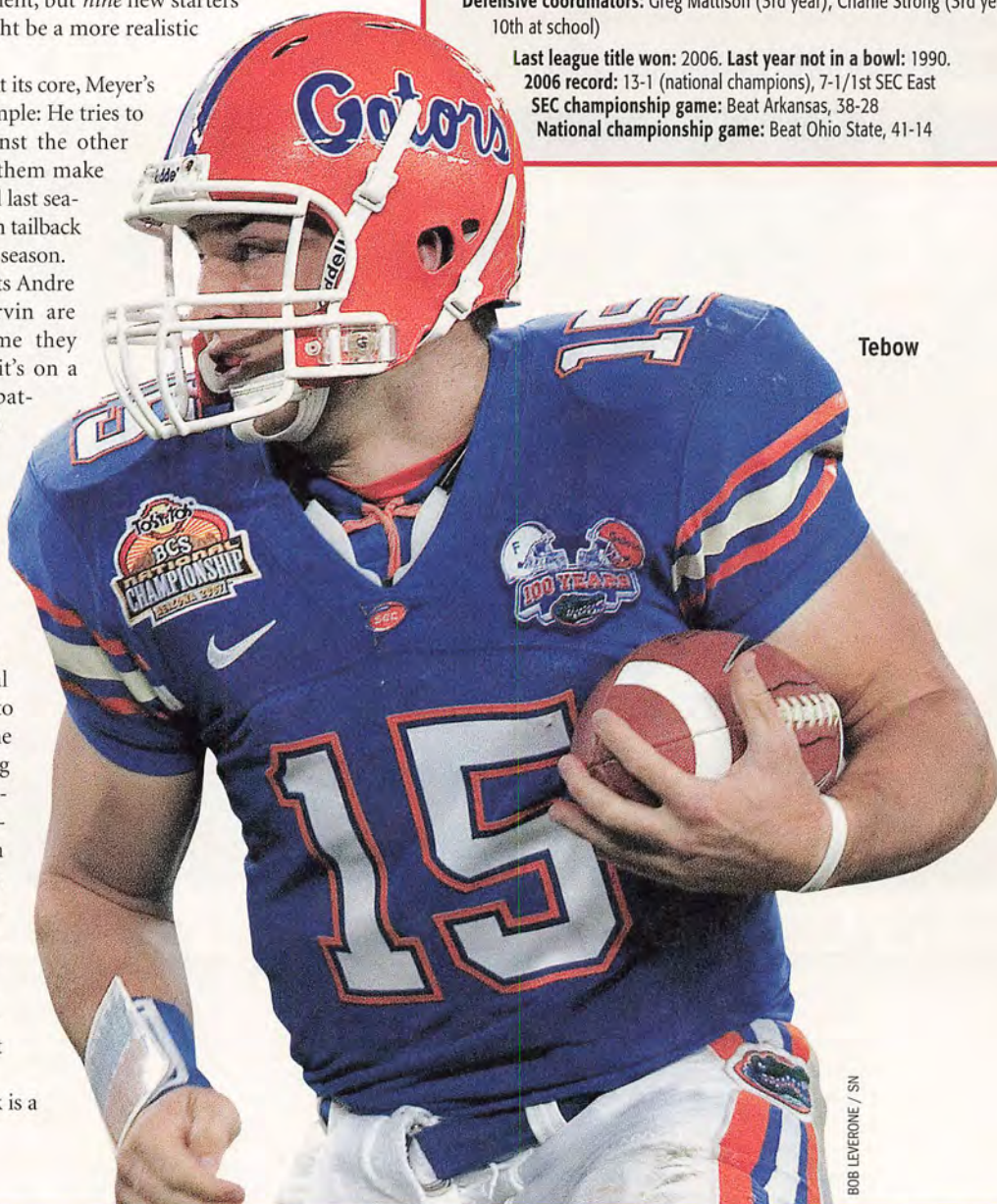
Defensive coordinators: Greg Mattison (3rd year); Charlie Strong (3rd year, 10th at school)

Last league title won: 2006. **Last year not in a bowl:** 1990.

2006 record: 13-1 (national champions), 7-1/1st SEC East

SEC championship game: Beat Arkansas, 38-28

National championship game: Beat Ohio State, 41-14



Tebow

BOB LEVERONE / SN

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Tim Tebow. Yes, there's a legitimate concern about Tebow. Everyone knows he can run. But can he pass effectively against SEC defenses? He still has to show he can complete a pass when everyone knows what's coming.

2 LB Brandon Spikes. The Gators lost all three starting linebackers, and Spikes received little playing time last season as a true freshman. Spikes will play this year and has all the tools to be a great one in the middle.

An SEC coach says ...

It will be interesting to see how they handle being the national champion—how it will affect their mindset. ... No doubt, this is **Urban Meyer's** offense. But (coordinator) **Dan Mullen** runs it. ... Defensive coordinator **Charlie Strong** likes to pressure and attack teams, but they don't do a whole lot. They just let their guys play. ... They don't really have a true running back. They used **Percy Harvin** a lot last year as a running back with the way they would get him the ball on the perimeter. It would help if a running back would step up.

mess. Mon Williams has all the tools and was going to be the guy, but he blew out a knee in the spring and is expected to miss the season. It looks as if Kestahn Moore, a plugger, will be the starter. Redshirt freshman Chevon Walker also will be in the mix. True freshman Chris Rainey is a burner, but at 5-9, he's not an every-down back.

OFFENSIVE LINE Last season's biggest question is this year's biggest strength. Four starters return, though Drew Miller might move from guard to center. Miller likely is the team's most consistent blocker. Tackles Carlton Medder and Phil Trautwein held up better than expected in their first seasons as starters and have all-league potential. Jim Tartt and Ronnie Wilson are the kind of rough-and-tumble maulers Meyer wants in his guards, and if they stay healthy, Miller will be the center. Wilson has some legal issues that might result in him being sidelined for a while, but depth at guard is good.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Co-coordinators Greg Mattison and Charlie Strong have meshed well. Strong calls the signals and generally puts all that speed at his disposal to good use. The coaches want to attack, but it'll be interesting to see how that works with so many first-time starters.

FRONT SEVEN End Derrick Harvey was outstanding in the BCS title game against Ohio State, and that should carry over. But there are no returning starters among the front seven. Brandon Antwine appears to be set at one tackle spot, but the other two line positions won't be set until the fall. Javier Estopinan and Clint McMillan will battle for time at tackle, and Jermaine Cunningham and Lawrence Marsh are leading contenders at end. The Gators signed one of the best defensive line classes in the nation and expect several true freshmen to get playing time.

There will be three new starters at linebacker: Brandon Spikes in the middle with speedsters Dustin Doe and A.J. Jones outside. Florida is shallow at linebacker (only four scholarship players competed in the spring), and several true freshmen will play.

SECONDARY Strong safety Tony Joiner is an all-conference candidate, but everybody else is new. Free safety Kyle Jackson has started before, so depth shouldn't be an issue at safety. Cornerback is a huge concern. Sophomores Markihe Anderson and Wondy Pierre-Louis, redshirt freshman Jacques Rickerson and true freshmen Ahmad Black and Moses Jenkins are the candidates. It's hard to imagine a title contender having corners this raw.

SPECIAL TEAMS True freshman Chas Henry might handle punting duties, and either Joey Ijas or Jonathan Phillips will be asked to improve a weak kicking game. Look for diminutive Brandon James (5-6) on punt returns and there is enough skill position talent to insure some explosive kick returns.

COACHING STAFF Meyer and his staff surprised many by winning the national title last season. They followed that by winning the mythical recruiting title, too. This program is white-hot, especially considering the recent struggles of Florida State and Miami. Just don't expect another national title in 2007. Another SEC crown will be possible if the rebuilt defense comes through.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Tim Tebow	89	469	5.3	8	
Percy Harvin	41	428	10.4	3	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Tim Tebow	22-33-1	358		5	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Andre Caldwell	57	577	10.1	6	
Percy Harvin	34	427	12.6	2	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Brandon James	54	746	13.8	1	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Jonathan Phillips	5	5	—	—	5
Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Tony Joiner	31	28	59	4.5/9	
Derrick Harvey	24	11	35	13/95	
Dustin Doe	14	8	22	1/1	
Sacks: Harvey (11)					
Interceptions: Joiner (2)					

Sacks: Harvey (11)

Interceptions: Joiner (2)



Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Western Kentucky		
9-8	Troy		
9-15	• Tennessee	21-20	3-2
9-22	at Mississippi		2-3
9-29	Auburn	17-27	3-2
10-6	■ at LSU	23-10	2-3
10-20	at Kentucky	26-7	5-0
10-27	vs. Georgia*	21-14	4-1
11-3	Vanderbilt	25-19	5-0
11-10	▲ at South Carolina	17-16	4-1
11-17	Fla. Atlantic		
11-24	Florida State	21-14	3-2

*at Jacksonville

■ Toughest game • Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

SEC schedule strength: 3rd

>The Series Georgia (37-46-2): The Gators have owned the Dawgs since 1990, winning 15 of 17 games. This one promises a great matchup of sophomore quarterbacks: Florida's Tim Tebow vs. Georgia's Matthew Stafford.

>The Showdown at LSU: The biggest hurdle in the Gators' bid for a perfect season. The Tigers are loaded and should be settled at quarterback by this time.

>The Smack Can Florida repeat as SEC champions? Yes—because both Tennessee and Auburn come to the Swamp. Can the Gators repeat as national champs? Yes, they get Florida State at home, and if they survive at LSU, only South Carolina on the road looks a little tricky.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	5	Andre Caldwell (6-0, 198, Sr.)
	83	David Nelson (6-4, 208, So.)
LT	75	Phil Trautwein (6-6, 298, Sr.)
	77	Jason Watkins (6-6, 304, Jr.)
LG	63	Jim Tartt (6-3, 312, Jr.)
	56	Maurkice Pouncey* (6-4, 310, Fr.)
C	67	Drew Miller (6-5, 297, Sr.)
	69	Eddie Haupt (6-4, 298, So.)
RG	74	Maurice Hurt (6-2, 317, Fr.)
	55	Michael Pouncey* (6-4, 310, Fr.)
RT	73	Carlton Medder (6-5, 318, Sr.)
	57	Carl Johnson (6-5, 339, Fr.)
WR	1	Percy Harvin (5-11, 181, So.)
	87	Justin Williams (6-1, 195, Fr.)
WR	9	Louis Murphy (6-2, 199, Jr.)
	86	Riley Cooper (6-3, 207, So.)
WR	7	Cornelius Ingram (6-4, 221, Jr.)
	11	Jarred Fayson (6-0, 200, So.)
QB	15	Tim Tebow (6-3, 234, So.)
	13	Cameron Newton* (6-5, 242, Fr.)
RB	33	Kestahn Moore (5-10, 208, Jr.)
	28	Brandon James (5-6, 178, So.)
K	38	Jonathan Phillips (5-10, 207, Jr.)
KR	25	Brandon James (5-6, 178, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	91	Derrick Harvey (6-4, 245, Jr.)
	90	Lawrence Marsh (6-5, 284, Fr.)
T	93	Javier Estopinan (6-1, 270, Jr.)
	47	Brandon Antwine (5-11, 265, So.)
T	98	Clint McMillan (6-1, 275, Sr.)
	99	Luttrell Alford (6-1, 306, Sr.)
E	49	Jermaine Cunningham (6-3, 230, So.)
	80	Trent Pupello (6-2, 275, Fr.)
SLB	16	A.J. Jones (6-1, 206, Fr.)
		Brandon Hicks* (6-2, 205, Fr.)
MLB	51	Brandon Spikes (6-3, 241, So.)
	41	Ryan Stamper (6-1, 227, So.)
WLB	32	Dustin Doe (6-0, 219, So.)
	41	Ryan Stamper (6-1, 227, So.)
CB	14	Markihe Anderson (5-9, 175, So.)
	23	Jacques Rickerson (5-9, 172, Fr.)
FS	3	Kyle Jackson (6-1, 201, Sr.)
	31	Bryan Thomas (6-1, 203, Fr.)
SS	19	Tony Joiner (5-11, 217, Sr.)
	20	Dorian Munroe (5-11, 200, So.)
CB	2	Markus Manson (5-11, 207, Jr.)
	4	Wondy Pierre-Louis (6-1, 184, So.)
P	92	Bobby Kane (6-0, 183, So.)
PR	25	Brandon James (5-6, 178, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

BULLDOGS

Georgia took a step back last year—losing to Kentucky and Vanderbilt in the same season is blasphemous—but won't stay there. This team is too talented and Mark Richt is too good of a coach to not be competing for the SEC East and the league championship.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Richt hasn't veered much from the offense he constructed as coordinator at Florida State: a multiple scheme that includes I-formation sets and power isolation plays for big tailbacks, and shotgun sets to throw it downfield. The only difference from previous seasons: Coordinator Mike Bobo now is the play-caller.

SKILL POSITIONS Here's all you need to know about Matthew Stafford: He's the most talented quarterback Richt ever has coached. That includes Heisman winners Charlie Ward and Chris Weinke. The staff didn't give Stafford too much of the offense last season to keep him from overthinking. Now that Stafford has a complete grasp of the offense, it's not a stretch to say he will be the SEC's best quarterback by season's end. The emergence of speedy wide receiver Mikey Henderson gives the team a legitimate deep threat, and if Mohamed Massaquoi gets over a case of the drops, the team will have a dangerous three-receiver set with Sean Bailey. Tight end Tripp Chandler no longer is a liability blocking, and that means his terrific hands can be featured more. Richt loves to pound away with a rotation of bruising tailbacks, and Gregg Lumpkin and Knowshon Moreno fit the description. The staff still has hope

Lumpkin

Quick hits

Stadium: Sanford (grass, 92,756).
Site: Athens, Ga.
Coach: Mark Richt

(61-17, 6 years)

Offensive coordinator: Mike Bobo (1st year, 7th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Willie Martinez (3rd year, 7th at school)

Last league title won: 2005.

Last year not in a bowl: 1996.

2006 record: 9-4, 4-4/T3rd SEC East
Chick-fil-A Bowl: Beat Virginia Tech, 31-24

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 WR Sean Bailey. The return of Bailey, a respected team leader, from knee surgery gives the passing game a dependable option and has inspired young receivers who have struggled with concentration and consistency.

2 DE Jarius Wynn. A junior college transfer who's physically ready to play in the SEC, Wynn should work his way into a starting spot on a team with size and experience issues at end. But can he be a difference-maker?



An SEC coach says ...

Mark Richt is a steady, consistent coach. He's good. ... These guys aren't very complex on offense. They execute just two or three different runs, and the passing game isn't very complicated. And you know what you're going to get from a protection standpoint from their offensive line. But what they do, they do well. ... They're going to have problems at linebacker. There are way too many unknowns. **Brandon Miller** is decent, but he's not star caliber. ... The thing lacking on defense last year was there was no physical safety.

that Thomas Brown can make it back this fall from a serious knee injury.

OFFENSIVE LINE Going into spring drills, nothing was more cause for concern than the revamped line. Going out, nothing was more solid. Five midyear enrollees from a top 10 recruiting class created stiff competition, and five clear starters resulted. One of those is freshman Trinton Sturdivant, who took the line's most important position (left tackle) and didn't relinquish it. JC transfer Scott Haverkamp will start at guard. The starting five—including tackle Chester Adams, guard Chris Davis and center Fernando Velasco—played every snap together for the final 11 practices (of an NCAA-allowed 15) and dominated the spring game.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY No matter the coordinator, Georgia's defense always has revolved around consistent pressure from the front four. Everything starts on the interior because it allows the unit to do more in the back seven with blitz and zone packages.

FRONT SEVEN Big, beefy, run-stuffing tackles have been the norm in Athens for years. Starters Geno Atkins and Jeff Owens are more on the agile/undersized side, but both are tough at the point of attack. The key to the interior is Kade Weston, a big-time talent whose weight issues have kept him from progressing. If he gets in shape and wins a starting job, the Dawgs have a strong four-man rotation with JC transfer Corvey Irvin. End Marcus Howard is quick off the edge but will be out-

matched by big tackles with good feet (there are plenty in the SEC). Roderick Battle played well in the spring, but he, too, is undersized. Hence, the need for big JC transfer Jarius Wynn to become an every-down player. The linebackers are solid. Brandon Miller will play in the middle, and a group of young players—led by redshirt freshman Akeem Dent—will compete for the starting spots in the fall.

SECONDARY Paul Oliver is one of the league's top cover corners, but after that, it gets dicey. Bryan Evans and Ramarcus Brown are competing for the other corner spot. Strong safety Kelin Johnson and free safety CJ Byrd appear to have won starting spots, but neither are big-hitting, game-changing safeties. The staff loves free safety Reshad Jones. He redshirted last season and was beginning to grasp nuances of the position by the end of spring drills.

SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Brandon Coutu is the SEC's best. Punter Brian Mimbs replaces the consistent Gordon Ely-Kelso. Henderson is one of the nation's top punt returners. Corner Asher Allen—the fastest player on the defense—will handle kickoff returns.

COACHING STAFF Richt promises he'll leave the play-calling to Bobo, who is more apt to call gadget plays but also knows the value of controlling the clock with a big tailback. Richt likes the results of new offensive line coach Stacy Searels' teaching. Searels' coaching was a key factor in LSU's running game the past four years.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Kregg Lumpkin	162	798	4.9	6	
Thomas Brown	62	256	4.1	1	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD		
Matthew Stafford	135-256-13	1,749	7		
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Mohamed Massaquoi	30	366	12.2	2	
Kregg Lumpkin	17	116	6.8	1	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Asher Allen	23	474	20.6	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Brandon Coutu	17	17	10	11	47
Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL	Yds.
Kelin Johnson	48	12	60	5.5/32	
Paul Oliver	46	11	57	6.5/19	
Ramarcus Brown	26	13	39	1/1	
Sacks: Johnson (2.5)					
Interceptions: Oliver (3)					

Sacks: Johnson (2.5)

Interceptions: Oliver (3)



Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Oklahoma State		
9-8	• South Carolina	18-0	5-0
9-15	Western Carolina		1-0
9-22	at Alabama		2-3
9-29	Mississippi	14-9	5-0
10-6	at Tennessee	33-51	3-2
10-13	at Vanderbilt	22-24	4-1
10-27	■ vs. Florida*	14-21	1-4
11-3	Troy		
11-10	Auburn	37-15	3-2
11-17	Kentucky	20-24	4-1
11-24	▲ at Georgia Tech	15-12	5-0

*at Jacksonville

■ Toughest game • Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

SEC schedule strength: 1st

>The Series Florida 46-37-2: No one needs to remind Uga of the recent history of this rivalry. Georgia's missteps in Jacksonville over the last 15 years are a big reason why the Bulldogs haven't been a legit contender for the national championship. Losing to the Gators has to end.

>The Showdown at Tennessee: No one in Athens can forget Georgia's meltdown in this game last year. Time for Mark Richt to weave his magic in Knoxville, where he's 3-0.

>The Smack Dawg days. Winning the East may be wishful thinking. No school has a more challenging opening 1-2 punch. And it's not crazy to think Georgia could lose every game outside of Sanford Stadium.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	4	Sean Bailey (6-1, 174, Sr.)
	1	Mohamed Massaquoi (6-2, 198, Jr.)
LT	77	Trinton Sturdivant* (6-5, 286, Fr.)
	72	Vince Vance (6-8, 330, So.)
LG	63	Chris Davis (6-4, 292, Fr.)
	54	Tanner Strickland* (6-5, 318, Fr.)
C	75	Fernando Velasco (6-4, 328, Sr.)
	74	Kevin Perez (6-3, 274, Fr.)
RG	70	Scott Haverkamp (6-4, 310, Jr.)
	78	Josh Davis (6-6, 293, Fr.)
RT	67	Chester Adams (6-4, 330, Sr.)
	79	Justin Anderson* (6-5, 335, Fr.)
TE	86	Tripp Chandler (6-6, 259, Jr.)
	84	Coleman Watson (6-6, 253, Sr.)
WR	27	Mikey Henderson (5-10, 150, Sr.)
	18	A.J. Bryant (6-2, 200, Sr.)
QB	7	Matthew Stafford (6-3, 237, So.)
	14	Joe Cox (6-1, 210, So.)
RB	6	Kregg Lumpkin (6-1, 222, Sr.)
	24	Knowshon Moreno (5-11, 207, Fr.)
FB	36	Brannan Southerland (6-0, 240, Jr.)
	49	Shaun Chapas (6-2, 227, Fr.)
K	96	Brandon Coutu (6-0, 200, Sr.)
KR	2	Asher Allen (5-10, 192, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	41	Roderick Battle (6-4, 256, So.)
	58	Damarcus Dobbs (6-2, 263, Fr.)
T	95	Jeff Owens (6-3, 292, Jr.)
	98	Tripp Taylor (6-1, 258, So.)
T	56	Geno Atkins (6-1, 275, So.)
	91	Kade Weston (6-5, 315, So.)
E	38	Marcus Howard (6-2, 220, Sr.)
	55	Jeremy Lomax (6-4, 233, Jr.)
SLB	52	Darius Dewberry (6-3, 230, So.)
	51	Akeem Dent (6-2, 218, Fr.)
MLB	12	Brandon Miller (6-4, 257, Sr.)
	44	Marcus Washington (6-0, 245, Jr.)
WLB	33	Dannell Ellerbe (6-1, 232, Jr.)
	50	Darryl Gamble (6-2, 240, Fr.)
CB	8	Paul Oliver (6-0, 201, Sr.)
	2	Asher Allen (5-10, 192, So.)
FS	5	CJ Byrd (6-2, 190, Jr.)
	9	Reshad Jones (6-2, 194, Fr.)
SS	30	Kelin Johnson (6-1, 194, Sr.)
	31	Quintin Banks (6-2, 197, Fr.)
CB	3	Bryan Evans (5-11, 179, So.)
	23	Prince Miller (5-8, 182, So.)
P	26	Brian Mimbs (5-11, 205, Jr.)
PR	27	Mikey Henderson (5-10, 150, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

VOLUNTEERS



Big Orange country has its share of impatient fans who are quick to point out that Phillip Fulmer hasn't won an SEC title since 1998. That streak has little chance of ending in 2007 unless playmakers emerge at receiver and on the defensive line. There are many challenges but perhaps none bigger than surviving September. The Vols open at California and two weeks later are at Florida.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Vols seek balance in a scheme that has remained basically unchanged since the early 1980s. But the failure to run the ball with authority the past several years has put undue emphasis on the passing game. Tennessee hit a low by rushing for only 108 yards per game last year. The fullback position essentially has been abandoned in favor of a tight end/H-Back alignment. The Vols might be more serious about going no-huddle in some situations; they devoted a decent amount of time to it during the spring.

SKILL POSITIONS Erik Ainge can be as good as any quarterback in the SEC. His arm is terrific and his confidence was restored by the return of offensive coordinator David Cutcliffe last year. Ainge missed most of the spring after surgery on his right knee, but he is expected to be fine. The bad news is that his top three receivers are gone and their replacements do not inspire accolades. Lucas Taylor, Quintin Hancock and Austin Rogers will have to fend off touted newcomers Kenny

Ainge

Quick hits

Stadium: Neyland (grass, 102,038).
Site: Knoxville, Tenn.

Coach: Phillip Fulmer (137-41, 15 years, 29 at school)

Offensive coordinator: David Cutcliffe (2nd year, 19th at school)

Defensive coordinator: John Chavis (13th year, 20th at school)

Last league title won: 1998.

Last year not in a bowl: 2005.

2006 record: 9-4, 5-3/2nd SEC East

Outback Bowl: Lost to Penn State, 20-10

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 DT Demonte' Bolden. Big things have been expected from the 2005 Parade All-American, but he has not yet delivered. Bolden claims his fire is finally lit. It better be because a run-stuffer is desperately needed up front.

2 WR Kenny O'Neal. There is no difference-maker at receiver, and O'Neal, a junior college transfer, is the most advanced of several touted newcomers. He'll get the opportunity to step in and make plays.

An SEC coach says ...

I think the natives are getting restless with South Carolina coming on, Georgia moving up and Florida on the rise. It wouldn't surprise me one bit if **Phillip Fulmer** is at a point in his life where if they win the SEC, he'll say: "OK, I've had enough." ... I kept hearing people talking about this monster comeback from **Erik Ainge** last season. He was good, but he wasn't great. If he stays healthy this year, his second with **David Cutcliffe** as his teacher, he'll be the best quarterback in the league. Cutcliffe has brought more discipline to the offense.

O'Neal, Gerald Jones and Ahmad Paige. Which means this could be a banner year for the tight ends—reliable Chris Brown and book-end 6-8 brothers Brad and Jeff Cottam. The running game should be a strength. LaMarcus Coker, Arian Foster and Montario Hardesty are competing to get the most carries, and each has produced at times. Coker (6.4 yards per carry) is the one who can go the distance. **OFFENSIVE LINE** Line play has been disappointing for several years, and the loss of star tackle Arron Sears only complicates matters. Josh McNeil, who started as a redshirt freshman at center, could be a future star when he gets stronger. Eric Young figures to start at right tackle or replace Sears on the left side. The other jobs will be decided among Jacques McClendon, Chris Scott, Ramon Foster, Ramone Johnson, Anthony Parker and Vladimir Richard. That's the group Fulmer hopes can return some muscle to a stagnant running game.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Tennessee has played a 4-3 for the past two decades, but coordinator John Chavis looked at a 3-4 in the spring, which speaks to concerns about the lack of quality tackles. Whether the Vols actually use the 3-4 could depend on development of the tackles, but there's plenty of depth and quality at linebacker if they choose to do so.

FRONT SEVEN Linebackers Jerod Mayo, Rico McCoy and Ryan Karl form the backbone of the defense, and Ellix Wilson could start in a 3-4 alignment. Mayo has all-conference skills and will play inside. McCoy, a future star, and the hard-nosed Karl flank Mayo on the outside. Up front is where the Vols have to get better—they recorded only 17 sacks last year. Xavier Mitchell is a top-shelf end, but the other end figures to be Antonio Reynolds or Robert Ayers, and neither is a difference-maker. Demonte' Bolden has yet to fulfill his vast promise at tackle, and J.T. Mapu, who wasn't much of a factor last season after a two-year Mormon mission, hopes to return to form. Several true freshman tackles have a chance to avoid redshirts.

SECONDARY Jonathan Hefney, an all-conference performer last season at free safety, also can play corner. Too bad he can't play both positions at once because the Vols have to replace three other starters. Marsalous Johnson had a strong spring to win one of the corner spots. Safety Jarod Parrish and corner Antonio Gaines also have a chance to win starting jobs. Don't count out true freshman corners Eric Berry and Art Evans or junior college transfer DeAngelo Willingham. This unit could be a strength in time.

SPECIAL TEAMS The legacy lives on with Britton Colquitt, who follows dad Craig, cousin Jimmy and brother Dustin as great Tennessee punters. Britton has a special leg and improved his average to 44.9 yards last year as a sophomore. Coaches hope he won't have to wear his leg out by adding kicking duties. James Wilhoit is gone, and redshirt freshman Daniel Lincoln has yet to inspire confidence. Hefney is an excellent punt return threat, but don't expect much out of a kickoff return unit that has been dormant for years.

COACHING STAFF After making changes a year ago, the Vols stood pat for 2007. Fulmer's career numbers are impressive, but fans are becoming increasingly disenchanted with recent results. An eight- or nine-win season would only fuel talk about a coaching change.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
LaMarcus Coker	108	696	6.4	5
Montario Hardesty	107	384	3.6	4

Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD
Erik Ainge	233-348-9	2,989	19

Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Chris Brown	31	239	7.7	1
Brad Cottam	14	182	13.0	0

Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Jonathan Hefney	19	238	12.5	0

Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
None					

Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.
Jonathan Hefney	66	30	96	3/6
Jerod Mayo	48	35	83	12.5/51
Ryan Karl	45	21	66	10/35

Sacks: Mayo (5)
Interceptions: Hefney (5)



Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	at California	35-18	2-1
9-8	Southern Miss		4-0
9-15	at Florida	20-21	2-3
9-22	Arkansas State		
10-6	Georgia	51-33	2-3
10-13	at Mississippi State		4-1
10-20	at Alabama	16-13	3-2
10-27	South Carolina	31-24	4-1
11-3	La-Lafayette		1-0
11-10	Arkansas	14-31	3-2
11-17	Vanderbilt	39-10	4-1
11-24	at Kentucky	17-12	5-0

■ Toughest game • Must win
▲ Best chance to be upset

SEC schedule strength: 2nd

>The Series Florida (19-17): Phillip Fulmer sees Gators in his sleep, having dropped 10 of the previous 14 meetings with the Swamp Things. That has resulted in the Vols re-adjusting their goals almost every season. It could happen again if Tennessee's line play isn't solid.

>The Showdown vs. Georgia: The good news: Tennessee has won two of the last three games. The bad news: Dawg boss Mark Richt is 3-0 in Knoxville. Fulmer will need his revamped receiving corps to deliver some big plays.

>The Smack Too much, too fast. Per usual, things start fast and finish slow. If the Vols can get to Halloween with one loss, fans will be giddy. But that's a big if.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	12	Lucas Taylor (6-0, 185, Jr.)
	85	Casey Woods (6-5, 215, Sr.)
TE	86	Brad Cottam (6-8, 270, Sr.)
	88	Luke Stocker (6-6, 235, Fr.)
LT	79	Chris Scott (6-5, 305, So.)
	72	Ramone Johnson (6-5, 310, Fr.)
LG	78	Ramon Foster (6-6, 325, Jr.)
	51	Vladimir Richard (6-4, 297, So.)
C	50	Josh McNeil (6-4, 280, So.)
	73	Michael Frogg (6-4, 290, Sr.)
RG	75	Anthony Parker (6-3, 305, Jr.)
	65	Jacques McClendon (6-3, 330, So.)
RT	54	Eric Young (6-4, 305, Sr.)
	71	Steven Jones (6-4, 305, Sr.)
TE	28	Chris Brown (6-3, 250, Sr.)
	80	Jeff Cottam (6-8, 260, So.)
WR	21	Austin Rogers (6-2, 185, So.)
	87	Quintin Hancock (6-3, 200, So.)
QB	10	Erik Ainge (6-6, 220, Sr.)
	8	Jonathan Crompton (6-4, 230, So.)
RB	27	Arian Foster (6-1, 225, Jr.)
	22	LaMarcus Coker (5-11, 195, So.)
K	47	Britton Colquitt (6-3, 205, Jr.)
KR	27	Arian Foster (6-1, 225, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	93	Xavier Mitchell (6-2, 255, Jr.)
	94	Wes Brown (6-4, 256, So.)
T	55	Dan Williams (6-3, 310, So.)
	98	Demonte' Bolden (6-6, 290, Jr.)
T	99	J.T. Mapu (6-4, 290, Sr.)
	98	Demonte' Bolden (6-6, 290, Jr.)
E	89	Antonio Reynolds (6-3, 270, Jr.)
	91	Robert Ayers (6-3, 260, Jr.)
SLB	39	Ryan Karl (6-0, 218, Sr.)
	53	Adam Myers-White (6-2, 215, Jr.)
MLB	7	Jerod Mayo (6-2, 230, Jr.)
	35	Ellix Wilson (5-10, 225, Jr.)
WLB	5	Rico McCoy (6-1, 215, So.)
	34	Dorian Davis (6-2, 215, So.)
CB	37	Antonio Gaines (5-9, 180, Sr.)
	25	Art Evans* (6-1, 185, Fr.)
FS	33	Jonathan Hefney (5-9, 185, Sr.)
	38	Antonio Wardlow (6-0, 185, So.)
SS	19	Jarod Parrish (6-3, 200, Sr.)
	15	Sinclair Cannon (6-2, 215, Jr.)
CB	31	Marsalous Johnson (5-9, 180, So.)
		DeAngelo Willingham (6-0, 195, Jr.)
P	47	Britton Colquitt (6-3, 205, Jr.)
PR	33	Jonathan Hefney (5-9, 185, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman



GAMECOCKS

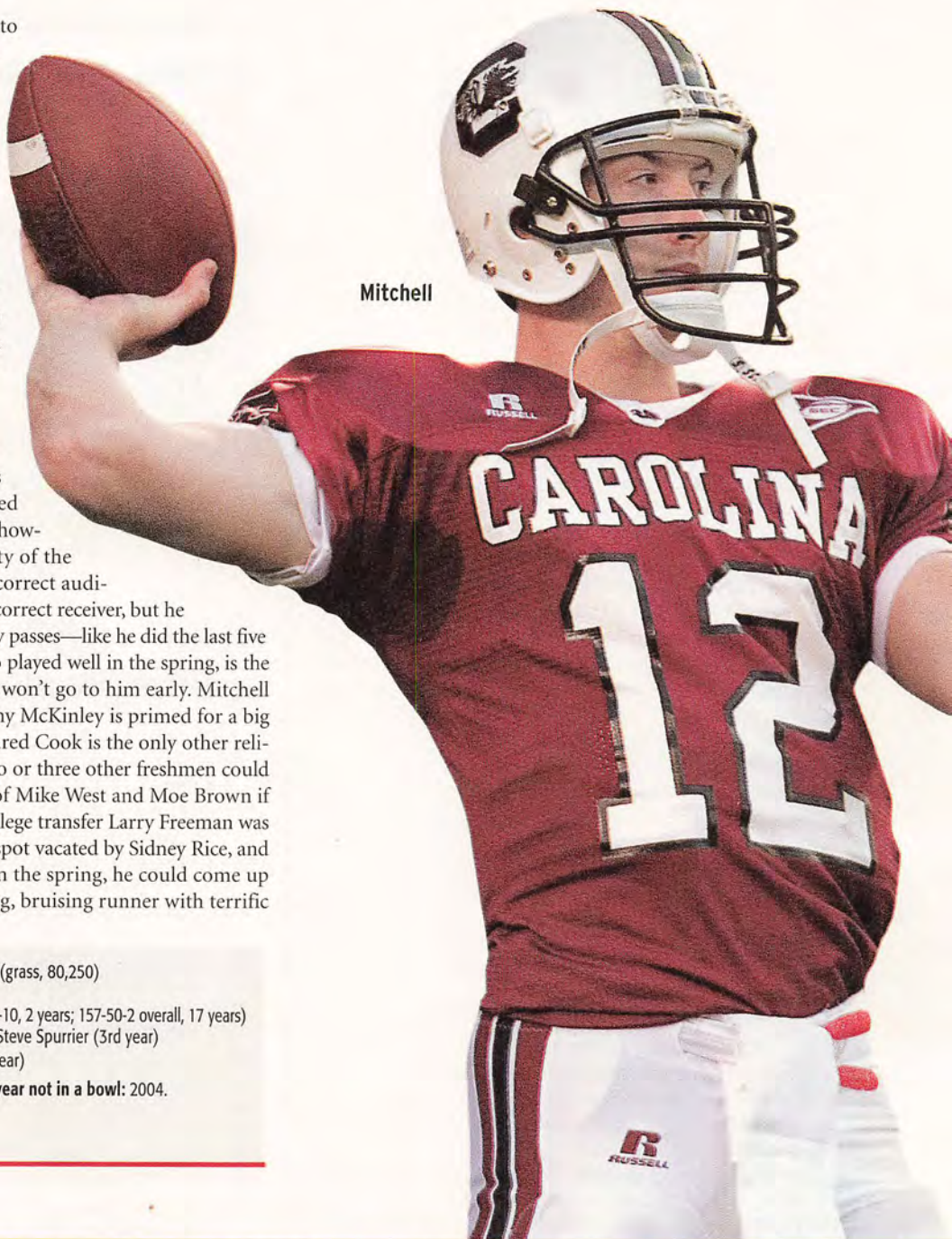
The euphoria over going to meaningless bowls is over.

Steve Spurrier didn't return to the college game to play Houston in the Liberty Bowl. Yeah, the SEC is tough and the schedule is brutal. Deal with it.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY There's little secrecy in Spurrier's offenses. It's the same 8-10 plays but run out of 15-20 formations. In other words, the defense prepares for 200 plays while Spurrier's offense runs the same 10 over and over and over until it's second nature.

SKILL POSITIONS Now is the time for Blake Mitchell to become what Spurrier expects from his quarterbacks. Mitchell has noodled around for much of two seasons, showing signs of grasping the enormity of the position. He struggles to call the correct audibles pre-snap and to throw to the correct receiver, but he has the ability to get hot and hit key passes—like he did the last five games of 2006. Chris Smelley, who played well in the spring, is the top backup. Don't think Spurrier won't go to him early. Mitchell needs help at receiver, where Kenny McKinley is primed for a big season, and converted tight end Jared Cook is the only other reliable option. Chris Culliver and two or three other freshmen could find a spot in the rotation ahead of Mike West and Moe Brown if they pick up the offense. Junior college transfer Larry Freeman was being counted on to step into the spot vacated by Sidney Rice, and even though Freeman struggled in the spring, he could come up big. Tailback Cory Boyd, a slashing, bruising runner with terrific

Mitchell



Quick hits

Stadium: Williams-Brice (grass, 80,250)

Site: Columbia, S.C.

Coach: Steve Spurrier (15-10, 2 years; 157-50-2 overall, 17 years)

Offensive coordinator: Steve Spurrier (3rd year)

Defensive coordinator: Tyrone Nix (3rd year)

Last league title won: 1969 (ACC). **Last year not in a bowl:** 2004.

2006 record: 8-5, 3-5/5th SEC East

Liberty Bowl: Beat Houston, 44-36

2-POINT conversion

GET IT
DONE
OR ELSE

1 WR Chris Culliver. USC signed seven receivers last February because guys on hand aren't cutting it. That means Culliver, the prize of the group, is expected to win a starting spot and take some heat off Kenny McKinley.

2 DE Travian Robertson. This team must get pressure on the quarterback and create turnovers. Robertson dominated in spring practice, but he still must grow into the position—he's 6-4 and only 250 pounds.



An SEC coach says ...

Steve Spurrier probably did as good a job coaching as he ever has done last year. To play teams like Auburn, Florida and Tennessee close last year was a credit to his coaching. ... QB **Blake Mitchell** is just a guy. He doesn't have a great arm, and he isn't going to beat you with his feet. But he can be effective if he doesn't force things. That's when he gets into trouble. ... I think the offensive line overachieved last year. And the defensive line is undersized and can be run on.

speed, is one of the best in the SEC. Boyd, Mike Davis and Bobby Wallace make up the league's most balanced backfield.

OFFENSIVE LINE How bad is it? Spurrier says the group can block on draw plays because "you don't even have to block on a draw play." There's no getting around it: They're just not that physical. Tackles Justin Sorensen and Jamon Meredith are the best of the bunch, but both have to become more fluid in pass protection. The middle three is a mess; center William Brown is serviceable, but guards Garrett Anderson and James Thompson have to improve for the team to run efficiently. Spurrier could play walk-ons or true freshmen (Clifton Geathers, Quintin Richardson).

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Once coordinator Tyrone Nix seized control of the unit midway through the 2005 season, it quickly embraced his aggressive yet controlled philosophy. Anyone can fly around the place. Players who understand their responsibilities and run to the ball are most successful.

FRONT SEVEN These guys dominated so completely this spring, it left the nagging, age-old question: Were they that good, or was the opposition (the offensive line) that bad? It might be a little of both. After the influx of freshmen in the fall—four could play—the unit will rotate at least nine players. Tackles Marque Hall and Nathan Pepper are the starters, and the play of freshmen Kenrick Ellis and Ladi Ajiboye in the spring only strengthened a soft interior. Ends Travian Robertson and Eric Norwood give the Gamecocks athleticism off the edge. Back that up with the middle linebacker

Jasper Brinkley, the SEC's best linebacker, and the once-shaky run defense has the potential to be much better this fall.

SECONDARY Spurrier spent time this offseason watching game tape with the secondary, showing them what quarterbacks look for. Safties Brandon Isaac and Emanuel Cook are big hitters, and the team has three quality corners (Captain Munnerlyn, Chris Hail and Carlos Thomas) who are all solid in run support. Munnerlyn will be one of the SEC's best cover corners by the end of the season. Bottom line: The secondary is much better than last season, when the team was forced to use quarterback Syvelle Newton at safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS Ryan Succop has one of the SEC's strongest legs and will handle both the kicking and punting duties. He has improved his accuracy greatly since his freshman season and last year hit 8-of-11 from 40 yards and beyond (two from 50 and beyond). Munnerlyn, McKinley, West and Thomas all have good speed and will handle the returns.

COACHING STAFF The addition of linebackers/special teams coach Shane Beamer—son of Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer and highly respected among his peers as a rising young assistant—strengthens what already is a solid group. If things go well, this will be Nix's last season in Columbia; he's too good of a teacher/manager to not be hired as a head coach.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Cory Boyd	164	823	5.0	8	
Mike Davis	100	474	4.7	6	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD		
Blake Mitchell	135-202-6	1,789	10		
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Kenny McKinley	51	880	17.3	5	
Cory Boyd	35	406	11.6	2	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Carlos Thomas	15	284	18.9	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Ryan Succop	37	39	16	20	85
Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Jasper Brinkley	85	22	107	14.5/37	
Marvin Sapp	35	16	51	2.5/14	
Stoney Woodson	39	8	47	2/4	
Sacks: Casper Brinkley, Eric Norwood (7)					
Interceptions: Woodson (3)					

Sacks: Casper Brinkley, Eric Norwood (7)

Interceptions: Woodson (3)



Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	La.-Lafayette		1-0
9-8	at Georgia	0-18	0-5
9-15	South Carolina State		
9-22	at LSU		1-3-1
9-29	Mississippi State	15-0	4-1
10-4	Kentucky*	24-17	5-0
10-13	at North Carolina		3-2
10-20	Vanderbilt	31-13	5-0
10-27	at Tennessee	24-31	1-4
11-3	at Arkansas	20-26	2-3
11-10	▲ Florida	16-17	1-4
11-24	● Clemson	31-28	1-4

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

SEC schedule strength: 6th

>The Series Clemson (37-63-4): Last year's win could mean the days of being dominated by the Tigers are coming to an end. That's Step One in raising this program.

>The Showdown vs. Florida: Steve Spurrier is 1-1 vs. his old school. To have any chance this year, he better hope his offense has found its step by the time these looming rivals meet.

>The Smack Will this be a breakout year? Don't count on it. It's easy to find six wins. But after that, many games could go either way. The Gamecocks will need some of that ol' Ballcoach magic to pull out victories at places like Georgia and LSU. And check out the last four games. Yeah, South Carolina should be happy with another mid-dling bowl trip.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	11	Kenny McKinley (6-0, 181, Jr.)
	23	Mike West (6-0, 219, Sr.)
LT	77	Jamon Meredith (6-5, 295, Jr.)
	75	Gurminder Thind (6-4, 293, Jr.)
LG	70	Garrett Anderson (6-4, 300, So.)
	60	Matt Raysor (6-3, 315, Jr.)
C	71	William Brown (6-4, 291, Sr.)
	65	Ryan Broadhead* (6-5, 271, Fr.)
RG	67	James Thompson (6-3, 320, Sr.)
	57	Lemuel Jeanpierre (6-3, 295, So.)
RT	78	Justin Sorensen (6-7, 323, Jr.)
	66	Hutch Eckerson (6-6, 286, So.)
TE	80	Andy Boyd (6-4, 267, Sr.)
	93	Robert Pavlovic (6-4, 255, Sr.)
WR	9	Moe Brown (6-0, 180, So.)
	84	Jared Cook (6-5, 236, So.)
QB	12	Blake Mitchell (6-3, 211, Sr.)
	7	Chris Smelley (6-1, 221, Fr.)
RB	3	Cory Boyd (6-1, 214, Sr.)
	25	Mike Davis (5-9, 212, Jr.)
FB	39	Lanard Stafford (5-9, 247, Sr.)
	43	Ryan Brown (6-0, 256, Sr.)
K	14	Ryan Succop (6-2, 213, Jr.)
KR	1	Captain Munnerlyn (5-9, 180, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	41	Jordin Lindsey (6-3, 254, Sr.)
	99	Jonathan Williams (6-2, 273, Jr.)
T	79	Marque Hall (6-3, 302, Jr.)
	91	Ladi Ajiboye* (6-1, 294, Fr.)
T	95	Nathan Pepper (6-1, 290, Jr.)
	97	Kenrick Ellis (6-5, 327, Fr.)
E	85	Eric Norwood (6-0, 264, So.)
	42	Travian Robertson* (6-4, 250, Fr.)
SLB	51	Casper Brinkley (6-2, 257, Sr.)
	31	Gerrod Sinclair (6-0, 233, So.)
MLB	52	Jasper Brinkley (6-2, 262, Sr.)
	44	Dustin Lindsey (6-3, 239, Jr.)
WLB	45	Rodney Paulk (6-0, 217, So.)
	53	Marvin Sapp (5-11, 222, Jr.)
CB	1	Captain Munnerlyn (5-9, 180, So.)
	36	Stoney Woodson (5-11, 196, Jr.)
FS	26	Brandon Isaac (6-2, 201, Sr.)
	32	Darian Stewart (5-11, 218, So.)
SS	21	Emanuel Cook (5-10, 216, So.)
	33	Chris Hampton (5-11, 194, Sr.)
CB	5	Carlos Thomas (5-11, 192, Jr.)
	18	Chris Hail (5-10, 195, So.)
P	14	Ryan Succop (6-2, 213, Jr.)
PR	11	Kenny McKinley (6-0, 181, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

KENTUCKY WILDCATS

SN projection **5th, 6-6, Independence Bowl** National rank **53**

The Wildcats are poised to build on a rare eight-win season for them. Quarterback Andre' Woodson heads a strong contingent at the skill positions. How much the defense can improve and how the Wildcats fare in their winnable road games will determine if eight victories are doable again. Another bowl trip should be on the docket.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The SEC's top-ranked passing attack resides in Lexington. The Wildcats have quick-strike capabilities and keep defenses spread. The running game, well, that's another story.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Woodson will challenge for all-SEC

honors. He threw 31 touchdown passes and only seven interceptions last year, when he learned to trust his protection and slide in the pocket instead of always running if things broke down. NFL scouts will be watching Woodson and his favorite target, Keenan Burton, who caught 77 passes for 1,036 yards. Teams can't just focus on him, either, not with wideout Dicky Lyons. and tight end Jacob Tamme on the field. Tailback Rafael Little hasn't had a great line to run behind—and it could be a weak link again—but he runs hard and makes the best of it. Garry Williams and Christian Johnson are the best on an unproven line.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	19	Keenan Burton (6-2, 195, Sr.)
	13	Steve Johnson (6-3, 198, Sr.)
LT	79	Garry Williams (6-3, 290, Jr.)
	72	Zipp Duncan (6-5, 260, So.)
LG	78	Christian Johnson (6-4, 325, Jr.)
	68	Michael Williams (6-6, 294, So.)
C	59	Eric Scott (6-5, 275, Sr.)
	61	Jorge Gonzalez (6-3, 300, So.)
RG	66	Jason Leger (6-1, 287, Sr.)
	73	Jess Beets (6-2, 277, Jr.)
RT	71	James Alexander (6-5, 283, Jr.)
	64	Josh Winchell (6-3, 305, Jr.)
TE	18	Jacob Tamme (6-5, 240, Sr.)
	80	T.C. Drake (6-6, 230, So.)
WR	12	Dicky Lyons (5-11, 190, Jr.)
	8	DeMoreo Ford (5-10, 186, Jr.)
QB	3	Andre' Woodson (6-5, 230, Sr.)
	5	Mike Hartline (6-6, 201, Fr.)
RB	22	Rafael Little (5-10, 195, Sr.)
	28	Tony Dixon (5-9, 203, Jr.)
FB	40	Maurice Grinter (6-3, 250, So.)
	38	John Conner (5-11, 228, So.)
K	36	Lones Seiber (5-9, 185, So.)
KR	19	Keenan Burton (6-2, 195, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
LE	99	Jeremy Jarmon (6-3, 268, So.)
	96	J.D. Craigman (6-4, 258, Sr.)
LT	91	Corey Peters (6-3, 290, So.)
	95	Corey Jenkins (6-2, 285, Jr.)
RT	98	Myron Pryor (6-1, 300, Jr.)
	53	Ricky Lumpkin (6-4, 289, Fr.)
RE	97	Nii Adjei Oninku (6-1, 248, Jr.)
	20	Dominic Lewis (6-3, 261, Sr.)
SLB	50	Sam Maxwell (6-3, 225, So.)
	51	Johnny Williams (6-3, 240, Jr.)
MLB	56	Braxton Kelley (6-0, 226, Jr.)
	4	Micah Johnson (6-2, 270, So.)
WLB	16	Wesley Woodyard (6-1, 212, Sr.)
	47	A.J. Nance (5-11, 250, So.)
CB	32	Trevard Lindley (6-0, 175, So.)
	34	Paul Warford (5-11, 200, So.)
FS	2	Marcus McClinton (6-1, 210, Jr.)
	33	Calvin Harrison (6-1, 200, So.)
SS	27	Ashton Cobb (6-0, 205, So.)
	35	Roger Williams (6-0, 204, Jr.)
CB	17	E.J. Adams (6-0, 190, So.)
	23	Shomari Moore (5-9, 185, Jr.)
P	44	Tim Masthay (6-2, 185, Jr.)
PR	22	Rafael Little (5-10, 195, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Commonwealth (grass, 67,606)

Site: Lexington, Ky.

Coach: Rich Brooks (17-30, 4 years; 108-139-4 overall, 22 years)

Offensive coordinator: Joker Phillips (3rd year, 14th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Steve Brown (1st year, 5th at school)

Last league title won: 1976 (tie). **Last year not in a bowl:** 2005.

2006 record: 8-5, 4-4/T3rd SEC East

Music City Bowl: Beat Clemson, 28-20

Returning leaders: Rushing—Rafael Little (140 att., 673 yards, 3 TDs). Passing—Andre' Woodson (264-419-7, 3,515 yards, 31 TDs). Receiving—Keenan Burton (77 rec., 1,036 yards, 12 TDs).



ALBERT DICKSON / SN

SPECIAL TEAMS Kentucky was the only team in the nation ranked in the top 10 in punt and kickoff returns. Little averaged a whopping 22.6 yards on punt returns and Burton was productive on kickoffs.

COACHING STAFF At the end of 2005, a lot of folks didn't expect Rich Brooks to be back, but he rewarded athletic director Mitch Barnhart for his patience with Kentucky's best season since 1984. Joker Phillips is a solid offensive coordinator, and adding Randy Sanders from Tennessee as quarterbacks coach last year paid dividends with Woodson's development. The hope now is fresh leadership on defense will upgrade that unit from its dubious past.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The defense improved in 2006 but still allowed 100 yards more a game than any other SEC team. Former secondary coach Steve Brown takes over as coordinator, and indications are he'll simplify things so the team will start attacking instead of reacting. The unit did produce 32 takeaways last season.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL There is talent and plenty of experience. Free safety Marcus McClinton and corner Trevard Lindley are quality players. Linebackers Wesley Woodyard and Braxton Kelley are playmakers. Linebacker Micah Johnson didn't have the impact expected as a freshman but still is promising. The front four remains suspect, though tackle Corey Peters could develop into something special. Opponents have been able to run the ball down Kentucky's throat for years.

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Eastern Kentucky	
9-8	Kent State	
9-15	▲ Louisville	28-59
9-22	at Arkansas	
9-29	Fla. Atlantic	
10-4	at South Carolina*	17-24
10-13	■ LSU	0-49
10-20	Florida	7-26
10-27	● Mississippi State	34-31
11-10	at Vanderbilt	38-26
11-17	at Georgia	24-20
11-24	Tennessee	12-17

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

SEC schedule strength: 7th

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 **C Eric Scott.** He is poised to fill an important opening at center. The converted defensive lineman has bulked up to 275 pounds and ran a 4.8 40 in the spring. The coaches like his footwork and athleticism.

2 **CB E.J. Adams.** Last year Adams gave the Wildcats a hint of good things to come. The explosiveness he showed as a true freshman should help him win a starting job in the secondary.

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WON '06: Bengals (-4 1/2) Packers 48-17
- **My September College Game of the Year**
WON '06: LSU (-15) Ariz 45-3
- **My September Pro Game of the Year**
WON '06: Broncos (+6 1/2) Pats 17-7 and more

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S10	Cowboys (+2) Jaguars	17-24	L		
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O 8	Vikings (-6 1/2) Lions	26-17	W	N 4	Tex Tech(-16) Baylor 55-21 W
	Eagles (-1 1/2) Cowboys	38-24	W	N12	Titans (+7) Ravens 26-27 W
O12	Colo St (+6) AFA	21-24	W	N18	Michigan (+7) Ohio St 39-42 W
O14	LSU (-26) Kentucky	49-0	W		Alabama (+3) Auburn 15-22 L
	Oklahoma (-19) Iowa St	34-9	W	N19	Pats (-5 1/2) Packers 35-0 W
O15	Redskins (-10) Titans	22-25	L	N23	Dolphins (-3) Lions 27-10 W
O23	Giants/Cowboys (+44 1/2)	36-22	W		Chiefs (-1) Broncos 19-10 W
O28	So Miss (-5 1/2) E Car	17-20	L	N24	Fresno St(-12) La Tech 34-27 L
O29	Raiders (+9 1/2) Steelers	20-13	W	N26	Bengals (-3) Browns 30-0 W

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VANDERBILT

COMMODORES

SN projection **6th, 4-8**National rank **78**

Vandy sent a message to the Floridas and Georgias the past two seasons: It no longer is an easy out on the SEC schedule. Still, the Commodores haven't touched .500 since 1982 and aren't like to this season. This group has nice returning talent and should prevail in three of its four non-SEC games. But winning more than two league games always is a challenge.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The 'Dores will keep defenses guessing and off-balance because of quarterback Chris Nickson's ability to run or throw.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Wide-out Earl Bennett could play for any program in America.



ALBERT DICKSON / SN

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	10	Earl Bennett (6-1, 202, Jr.)
	81	Bryant Anderson (6-3, 210, Jr.)
LT	74	Chris Williams (6-6, 315, Sr.)
	66	Eric Hensley (6-6, 305, So.)
LG	78	Josh Eames (6-5, 310, Sr.)
	70	Drew Gardner (6-5, 305, So.)
C	53	Hamilton Holliday (6-3, 290, Sr.)
	70	Bradley Vierling (6-3, 290, So.)
RG	64	Merritt Kirchoffer (6-5, 315, Sr.)
	73	Ryan Custer (6-4, 295, So.)
RT	72	Brian Stamper (6-5, 295, Sr.)
	76	Thomas Welch (6-6, 285, So.)
TE	83	Brad Allen (6-3, 240, Jr.)
	85	Jake Bradford (6-6, 260, So.)
WR	88	George Smith (6-3, 195, Jr.)
	26	Alex Washington (5-10, 180, So.)
WR	7	Sean Walker (6-0, 180, Jr.)
	80	Justin Wheeler (6-0, 175, So.)
QB	3	Chris Nickson (6-2, 210, Jr.)
	9	Mackenzi Adams (6-2, 208, So.)
RB	22	Cassen Jackson-Garrison (6-1, 220, Sr.)
	21	Jeff Jennings (6-1, 222, Jr.)
K	8	Bryant Hahnfeldt (5-11, 180, Jr.)
KR	7	Sean Walker (6-0, 180, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	48	Curtis Gatewood (6-3, 245, Sr.)
	51	Quavian Lewis (6-3, 225, So.)
T	56	Gabe Hall (6-1, 288, Sr.)
	98	Greg Billinger (6-2, 290, So.)
T	54	Theo Horrocks (6-3, 295, Sr.)
	92	Brandon Holmes (6-3, 295, Jr.)
E	96	Steven Stone (6-6, 255, So.)
	90	Broderick Stewart (6-5, 225, So.)
SLB	24	Marcus Buggs (5-11, 235, Sr.)
	52	Nate Campbell (6-3, 228, Fr.)
MLB	47	Jonathan Goff (6-4, 235, Sr.)
	57	Chris Johnson (6-1, 230, So.)
WLB	35	Brandon Bryant (6-1, 230, So.)
	30	Patrick Benoist (6-0, 215, So.)
CB	16	D.J. Moore (5-10, 175, So.)
	14	Josh Allen (5-9, 182, Jr.)
FS	2	Ryan Hamilton (6-1, 205, So.)
	29	Joel Caldwell (6-1, 185, So.)
SS	33	Reshard Langford (6-2, 215, Jr.)
	41	Brent Trice (6-2, 205, So.)
CB	5	Myron Lewis (6-2, 195, So.)
	20	Jared Fagan (5-10, 180, Jr.)
P	39	Brett Upson (5-10, 175, So.)
PR	10	Earl Bennett (6-1, 202, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Vanderbilt (grass, 39,773). **Site:** Nashville
Coach: Bobby Johnson (15-43, 5 years; 75-79 overall, 13 years)
Offensive coordinator: Ted Cain (6th year)
Defensive coordinator: Bruce Fowler (6th year)

Last league title won: None. **Last bowl appearance:** 1982.

2006 record: 4-8, 1-7/6th SEC East

Returning leaders: Rushing—Chris Nickson (146 att., 694 yards, 9 TDs). Passing—Chris Nickson (160-292-13, 2,085 yards, 15 TDs). Receiving—Earl Bennett (82 rec., 1,146 yards, 6 TDs).

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Richmond	
9-8	▲ Alabama	10-13
9-15	● Mississippi	10-17
9-29	Eastern Michigan	
10-6	at Auburn	
10-13	Georgia	24-22
10-20	at South Carolina	13-31
10-27	Miami (Ohio)	
11-3	■ at Florida	19-25
11-10	Kentucky	26-38
11-17	at Tennessee	10-39
11-24	Wake Forest	

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

SEC schedule strength: 5th

Coming off an 82-catch season, he is on pace to break the SEC career receptions record before the end of October. There's a big drop-off after him. Nickson did better than expected last fall after stepping into Jay Cutler's shoes, but he didn't always throw it to the gold jerseys. Nickson had 13 interceptions to go with 15 touchdown passes. One would expect his decision-making to improve in his second year. Nickson is a threat to run—he led the team in rushing—but running backs Cassen Jackson-Garrison and Jeff Jennings are only adequate. The 'Dores are crossing their fingers that tackle Brian Stamper makes a successful return from back surgery. If Stamper is good to go, Vandy will start five seniors up front—and should run the ball better. The anchor is left tackle Chris Williams, who was second-team All-SEC last fall. The inside guys are less impressive.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The 'Dores line up in a 4-3 front. The tackles are standard-issue, but the ends are smallish. The unit must rely on speed.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Eight starters return from a defense that ranked 10th in the SEC in both yards and points allowed per game. Two of the three vacancies are up front. End Curtis Gatewood and tackle Theo Horrocks are the veterans. Gatewood, who had seven sacks and forced three fumbles,

shows some moves. Horrocks rarely leaves the field. Middle linebacker Jonathan Goff plays with a mean streak and has a future in the NFL. The secondary returns intact. Hard-hitting strong safety Reshard Langford is the bell cow, but no one else has yet to measure up to his level. D.J. Moore and Joel Caldwell got thrown to the wolves as freshmen and should be more settled. Myron Lewis will play, too.

SPECIAL TEAMS There is lots of room for improvement. The punting and kicking games were subpar, and returner Alex Washington didn't scare anyone.

COACHING STAFF Bobby Johnson is as secure as any coach in the SEC. School officials and his peers recognize he's a good fit at the league's only small, private institution. Nine of his 15 wins at Vandy came the past two seasons.

2-POINT conversion
 GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 OT Thomas Welch. He has morphed from prep quarterback to tight end to 285-pound tackle. The coaches like his footwork, and he quickly will become a key player if Brian Stamper's back troubles linger.

2 CB Myron Lewis. Mostly a special teams contributor last season, he will be hard to keep out of the starting lineup in a secondary that needs an upgrade. At 6-2, 195, he has excellent size.

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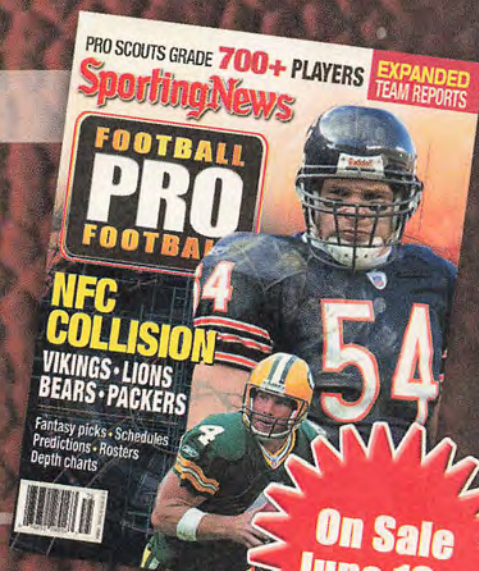
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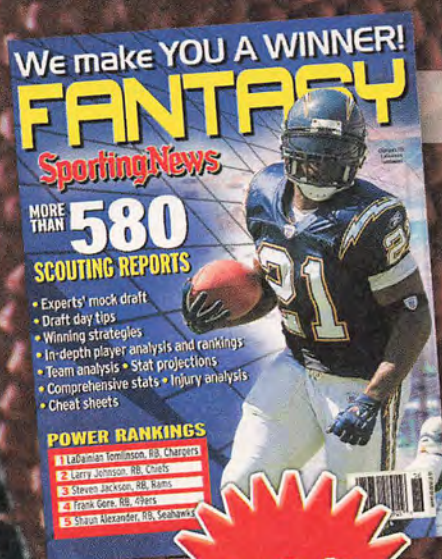
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TIGERS

Another odd-numbered year, another schedule conducive to a national championship conversation. There are no Nick Saban hires remaining on Les Miles' coaching staff, so Miles will get more credit—and more blame—than ever. To win an SEC title and maybe even more, LSU needs one of the nation's best defensive lines to mind the store while trainees learn all layers of new coordinator Gary Crowton's spread offense.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Miles likes to set up the pass with the run. If Matt Flynn can hit the ground running (and throwing), Crowton could open better running lanes with a Gulf Coast Offense that puts a premium on delivering the ball quickly to playmakers in open space. Crowton will have fun getting the ball to explosive track star Trindon Holliday and incorporating some option into the offense.

SKILL POSITIONS Miles and Crowton held back in the spring, but there's evidence that Flynn, a fifth-year senior, will alternate with sophomore Ryan Perrilloux if opponents

seem vulnerable to such a rotation. A limited resume for both players means Crowton's biggest challenge could be preparing them to adjust to the speed of the game.

Keiland Williams will begin the season as the closest thing to a feature back, not to mention the best facsimile of Alley Broussard's pre-2005 speed and torque. If Broussard's knee is all the way back from ACL surgery, LSU could have an enviable running back committee. Richard Murphy's ability to make defenders miss also could play well in Crowton's spread attack.

Early Doucet becomes the first option at wide receiver, and he'll affect field position as a return man, even when teams kick away from him. Brandon LaFell also is an option, but he sometimes needs mental Stickum. Tight

Doucet

Quick hits

Stadium: Tiger (grass, 92,400). **Site:** Baton Rouge, La.
Coach: Les Miles (22-4, 2 years; 50-25 overall, 6 years)
Offensive coordinator: Gary Crowton (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Bo Pelini (3rd year)

Last league title won: 2003. **Last year not in a bowl:** 1999.

2006 record: 11-2, 6-2/T2nd SEC West

Sugar Bowl: Beat Notre Dame, 41-14

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Matt Flynn. This fifth-year senior's one complete game, the 2005 Peach Bowl rout of Miami, showed he is LSU's best run-pass option since Matt Mauck. Smart play could make him LSU's first SEC champion QB since Mauck.

2 FS Curtis Taylor. This special teams playmaker is the first new starter at free safety in four years. LSU doesn't often need a last line of defense, but how Taylor plays will be the difference between a solid unit and a great one.

An SEC coach says ...

Les Miles has been winning the last few years with guys Nick Saban left behind, but he looks like he has been recruiting pretty well, too. ... This was easily the most talented team in the league last year, and it should be again. Their size and speed stands out. Physically, they are just a mismatch for a lot of teams. ... New offensive coordinator **Gary Crowton** is a spread guy, but I still think LSU will be physical on offense. I don't see any radical changes. ... **DT Glenn Dorsey** is special. He was a guy we were praying would go pro early. He's a beast.

end Keith Zinger is back to catch a few passes and assist a work-in-progress line.

OFFENSIVE LINE Left tackle Ciron Black will be Flynn's best friend. Center Brett Helms and guard Herman Johnson are steady. A healthy Will Arnold and Ryan Miller could stabilize guard play, with Lyle Hitt and other hopefuls still not quite ready for full-time duty. Carnell Stewart will get first shot at replacing Peter Dyakowski at right tackle, though Johnson could step in if Stewart fails.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Bo Pelini doesn't just want to stop the offense—he wants the ball. The law of averages says his emphasis on turnovers will pay off, a direct result of the pressure packages he employs.

FRONT SEVEN LSU has an embarrassment of riches up front. Tyson Jackson and Tremaine Johnson had highlight-video springs at the end positions. Still, Johnson could share one spot with Rahim Alem, who plays bigger than his modest frame. Then there's Glenn Dorsey, an All-American tackle who bypassed the NFL draft because of injury. Dorsey changes game plans—and games. If Ricky Jean-Francois returns from a spring discipline problem, he, too, will be a force in an imposing group of inside-outside linemen.

Darry Beckwith, who has wrestled the middle linebacker spot from Luke Sanders, has the mobility and savvy for a breakout season. Ali High-

smith's sideline-to-sideline play is a concern for offensive coordinators, and his experience is even more valuable. Coaches are waiting for Danny McCray and Jacob Cutrera to make a move. The signature of this unit is its ability to run laterally and swarm to the ball.

SECONDARY Cornerbacks Jonathan Zenon and Chevis Jackson become the veterans of this group with the departure of safeties LaRon Landry and Jessie Daniels. Jai Eugene and Chris Hawkins are athletic enough to compensate for growing pains as their backups. Craig Steltz played enough in 2006 to make a seamless transition at strong safety. Curtis Taylor is less of a proven commodity at free safety, and a shoulder separation in the spring game could be a concern. Still, he has made enough big plays on special teams to earn his shot.

SPECIAL TEAMS Patrick Fisher, the new punter, will need improved protection when Virginia Tech brings its block party to Tiger Stadium in Week 2. Colt David returns and will kick all field goals, but it's unclear if he has the leg for kickoffs, which now must be made from the 30-yard line instead of the 35.

COACHING STAFF Miles had to replace three offensive coaches, including coordinator Jimbo Fisher, who will handle the same role at Florida State. LSU could be a good fit for Crowton and his offensive imagination. The best move might have been a no-move: Pelini stayed put. For better or worse, this now is a Miles staff top to bottom.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Jacob Hester	94	440	4.7	6	
Keiland Williams	76	436	5.7	5	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Matt Flynn	12-20-1	133		2	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Early Doucet	59	772	13.1	8	
Jacob Hester	35	269	7.7	3	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Early Doucet	14	201	14.4	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Colt David	50	51	8	13	74
Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL	Yds.
Darry Beckwith	29	36	65	4/15	
Glenn Dorsey	22	42	64	8.5/42	
Ali Highsmith	26	37	63	5.5/16	
Sacks: Tyson Jackson (8.5)					
Interceptions: Craig Steltz, Jonathan Zenon (4)					



ALBERT DICKSON / SN

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
8-30	at Mississippi State*	48-17	5-0
9-8	• Virginia Tech		0-1
9-15	Middle Tennessee		1-0
9-22	South Carolina		3-1-1
9-29	at Tulane	49-7	5-0
10-6	■ Florida	10-23	3-2
10-13	at Kentucky	49-0	4-1
10-20	Auburn	3-7	2-3
11-3	▲ at Alabama	28-14	4-1
11-10	Louisiana Tech		5-0
11-17	at Mississippi	23-20, OT	5-0
11-23	Arkansas*	31-26	4-1

*Thursday ▲Friday

■ Toughest game • Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

SEC schedule strength: 10th

>The Series Auburn (21-19-1): It's Tiger vs. Tiger in what has become the premier series in the SEC West. Keep this in mind: The home team has won the last seven.

>The Showdown at Alabama: Nick Saban has gone from favorite son to reviled villain. Grudges aside, LSU needs its hyper-fast defense to win this game.

>The Smack Built for success? This sets up for a run at the national championship. LSU can grab the nation's attention by beating Virginia Tech. Save for that emotional trip to Tuscaloosa, the SEC heavy-lifting will come at home. The visit from Florida holds the key in what looks like a preview of the SEC championship game. Even if the Tigers win, can they beat the Gators again if they meet in the SEC title game?

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	1	Brandon LaFell (6-3, 194, So.)
	87	Jared Mitchell (5-11, 192, So.)
LT	70	Ciron Black (6-5, 314, So.)
	52	Cole Louviere (6-5, 286, Jr.)
LG	73	Will Arnold (6-4, 319, Jr.)
	65	Lyle Hitt (6-2, 284, So.)
C	74	Brett Helms (6-2, 283, Jr.)
	63	Ryan Miller (6-6, 318, Jr.)
RG	79	Herman Johnson (6-7, 351, Jr.)
	55	Andrew Decker (6-3, 284, So.)
RT	71	Carnell Stewart (6-4, 294, Sr.)
	67	Mark Snyder (6-7, 284, Fr.)
TE	89	Keith Zinger (6-4, 259, Sr.)
	82	Richard Dickson (6-3, 237, So.)
WR	9	Early Doucet (6-0, 207, Sr.)
	8	Trindon Holliday (5-5, 159, So.)
QB	15	Matt Flynn (6-3, 228, Sr.)
	11	Ryan Perrilloux (6-2, 222, So.)
RB	5	Keiland Williams (5-11, 223, So.)
	32	Charles Scott (5-11, 221, So.)
FB	18	Jacob Hester (6-0, 228, Sr.)
	40	Shawn Jordan (5-11, 236, Sr.)
K	6	Colt David (5-9, 175, So.)
KR	9	Early Doucet (6-0, 207, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	93	Tyson Jackson (6-5, 292, Jr.)
	49	Kirston Pittman (6-4, 260, Sr.)
T	72	Glenn Dorsey (6-2, 299, Sr.)
	97	Al Woods (6-5, 325, So.)
T	91	Charles Alexander (6-3, 294, So.)
	99	Marlon Favorite (6-1, 295, So.)
E	84	Rahim Alem (6-3, 252, So.)
	47	Tremaine Johnson (6-2, 273, Jr.)
SLB	35	Luke Sanders (6-4, 235, Jr.)
	56	Perry Riley (6-1, 220, So.)
MLB	48	Darry Beckwith (6-1, 232, Jr.)
	54	Jacob Cutrera (6-4, 227, So.)
WLB	7	Ali Highsmith (6-1, 226, Sr.)
	11	Kelvin Sheppard (6-3, 228, Fr.)
CB	21	Chevis Jackson (6-0, 190, Sr.)
	4	Jai Eugene (5-11, 184, Fr.)
FS	27	Curtis Taylor (6-3, 204, Jr.)
	44	Danny McCray (6-1, 205, So.)
SS	16	Craig Steltz (6-2, 204, Sr.)
	43	Harry Coleman (6-2, 205, So.)
CB	19	Jonathan Zenon (6-0, 176, Sr.)
	29	Chris Hawkins (6-1, 181, So.)
P	36	Patrick Fisher (6-5, 253, Sr.)
PR	9	Early Doucet (6-0, 207, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold • True freshman



TIGERS

No team in the SEC has been more difficult to figure out. The Tigers have as much talent as anyone but are hit and miss in big games. And two very big ones—at Florida and at LSU—will dictate their season.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Injuries and ineffective play by receivers limited Auburn's offense the past two seasons. Coordinator Al Borges wants strong, bruising runners to set up a downfield passing game. Circumstances, however, have forced the Tigers to use more of a West Coast, short-passing attack.

SKILL POSITIONS The top priority this fall is to rebuild quarterback Brandon Cox's confidence. He took a beating last season when an experienced line couldn't pass protect and a shaky receiving corps couldn't get open. Not surprisingly, his performance regressed. Rodgeriquis Smith and Montez Billings are legitimate threats and the team's most consistent receivers. But Robert Dunn and redshirt freshmen Tim Hawthorne and Terrell Zachery have the most talent of the group. As long as Cox has confidence in his protection and gets time to throw, the receivers will perform at a high level.

The passing game, however, isn't what drives this offense. The Tigers want to get physical and use as many as four tailbacks. Brad Lester, who shared time last season, is this year's starter. Ben Tate and Mario Fannin



Cox

BOB LEVERONE / SN

Quick hits

Stadium: Jordan-Hare (grass, 87,451).

Site: Auburn, Ala.

Coach: Tommy Tuberville (71-29, 8 years; 96-49 overall, 12 years)

Offensive coordinator: Al Borges (4th year)

Defensive coordinator: Will Muschamp (2nd year)

Last league title won: 2004. **Last year not in a bowl:** 1999.

2006 record: 11-2, 6-2/T2nd SEC West

Cotton Bowl: Beat Nebraska, 17-14

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB Mario Fannin. This redshirt freshman is the most dynamic player on the team. But Brad Lester is the clear No. 1 tailback, and 2006 breakout star Ben Tate is No. 2. So the explosive Fannin will have to wait. Or will he?

2 DE Sen'Derrick Marks. He was impressive last year as a freshman tackle. Now he's moving to provide more size on the edge. It will be interesting to see how the 287-pounder fares in a position that is about speed and athleticism.



An SEC coach says ...

Tommy Tuberville has done a good job. He sort of withstood the fire he went through there a few years ago when they tried to get rid of him, and he has the program where it can win year in and year out. Just because Nick Saban is in the state, it doesn't mean he's going to take it over. Tuberville is a competitor. It'll be fun watching them battle on and off the field. ... I think **Brad Lester** is an underrated running back. He runs hard and gets north-south in a hurry. I think he's their best back.

are bigger, faster and harder runners, but they're shaky in pass protection. Tight ends Cole Bennett and Tommy Trott are solid receivers who allow Borges to stretch the middle of the field.

OFFENSIVE LINE Four starters are gone, and the hope is that their replacements will bring more athleticism. Tackle King Dunlap has the size and wingspan to dominate in pass blocking but still has problems against quick rush ends. The four others have six combined career starts—undersized Andrew McCain, a former tight end and defensive tackle, guards Tyronne Green and Leon Hart and center Jason Bosley, who could be challenged in the fall by more physical redshirt freshman Mike Berry. No matter the starting five, this number must be decreased: 35—the sack total given up last year.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Will Muschamp is a disciple of Nick Saban, which means he will apply a ton of pressure. Coach Tommy Tuberville prefers speed over size, although the Tigers have been beefing up on the interior after getting pushed around in big games the past two seasons.

FRONT SEVEN The move of Sen'Derrick Marks from tackle to end was made easier by the emergence of tackles Pat Sims and Mike Blanc in the spring. Sims is a space eater, and Blanc, who has more speed than size, was unblockable. Josh Thompson plays the important nose tackle spot and is vastly underrated. Quentin Groves, an All-American candidate, could have a huge season if Marks can become a force on the other side. Groves has a lightning-quick move to the quarterback and excels in big-game atmospheres.

The linebacker corps is not as settled. Merrill Johnson missed most of the spring because of injury, and Patrick Trahan and Craig Stevens have more potential than experience. Then there's the curious case of linebacker Tray Blackmon, a potential All-SEC player who has as many suspensions as big plays. He is expected to return in the fall—and if he does, he'll probably start.

SECONDARY The secondary was torched in the spring and is full of uncertainty. The only lock is cornerback Patrick Lee, a physical, active player who allows Muschamp to play more man coverage. Free safety Aairon Savage, a big hitter with good cover skills, played well as a freshman and is on the verge of a breakout, and senior Erick Brock will compete with freshman Zac Etheridge for the strong safety spot. Jonathan Wilhite has the edge on Jeraud Powers for the other corner job.

SPECIAL TEAMS The Tigers have little experience in the kicking game and probably will use a redshirt freshman kicker (Ross Gornall) and punter (Ryan Shoemaker). The return game will be strong with speedy tailback Tristan Davis as the lead kick returner and Fannin handling punts.

COACHING STAFF Tuberville got Muschamp to leave the NFL—and Saban—last season, and he showed why he's a prime head coaching candidate with the way he managed the No. 7 scoring defense in the nation. Borges, likewise, is one of the most respected offensive minds in the game and also gets approached about coaching vacancies.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Brad Lester	104	510	4.9	9	
Ben Tate	54	392	7.3	3	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Brandon Cox	163-271-9	2,198		14	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Roderiquis Smith	26	452	17.4	4	
Prechae Rodriguez	14	168	12.0	1	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Tristan Davis	28	756	27.0	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
None					
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Eric Brock	32	18	50		—
Aairon Savage	31	17	48		3/14
Josh Thompson	24	19	43		4.5/13
Sacks: Quentin Brown (11)					
Interceptions: Brock (2)					

Sacks: Quentin Groves (11)

Interceptions: Brock (2)



Lester

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Kansas State		2-0
9-8	South Florida		
9-15	Mississippi State	34-0	5-0
9-22	New Mexico State		1-0
9-29	at Florida	27-17	2-3
10-6	Vanderbilt		5-0
10-13	▲ at Arkansas	10-27	3-2
10-20	■ at LSU	7-3	3-2
10-27	Mississippi	23-17	4-1
11-3	Tennessee Tech		
11-10	at Georgia	15-37	2-3
11-24	● Alabama	22-15	5-0

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

SEC schedule strength: 8th

>The Series Alabama (32-38-1):

These are high times on the Plains, as the Tigers have won all but one meeting this decade. Maintaining that dominance is paramount for Tommy Tuberville, who must show Nick Saban who's the boss.

>The Showdown at LSU: Let's call this the SEC West championship game. The bad news: Tuberville has a 1-3 record in Baton Rouge. Auburn's re-tooled rushing game holds the key.

>The Smack Watch your step. Playing eight home games, including the first four, is sweet. But don't skip past those first two tilts. They are tougher than advertised and must-wins when you consider all four road games are trapdoors.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	80	Roderiquis Smith (6-2, 184, Jr.)
	82	James Swinton (6-0, 177, Jr.)
LT	77	King Dunlap (6-9, 321, Sr.)
	78	Oscar Gonzalez (6-7, 294, So.)
LG	71	Tyronne Green (6-2, 307, Jr.)
	57	Byron Isom (6-3, 282, Fr.)
C	68	Jason Bosley (6-2, 280, Jr.)
	66	Mike Berry (6-3, 329, Fr.)
RG	72	Leon Hart (6-4, 297, Sr.)
	65	Nathan Farrow (6-4, 296, Jr.)
RT	75	Andrew McCain (6-6, 262, Jr.)
	70	Antwain Daniels (6-6, 287, Jr.)
TE	87	Cole Bennett (6-5, 261, Sr.)
	5	Tommy Trott (6-5, 254, So.)
WR	3	Robert Dunn (6-0, 177, So.)
	81	Terrell Zachery (6-0, 197, Fr.)
QB	12	Brandon Cox (6-2, 209, Sr.)
	16	Blake Field (6-2, 203, Jr.)
RB	1	Brad Lester (5-11, 191, Jr.)
	44	Ben Tate (5-11, 215, So.)
FB	32	Carl Stewart (6-2, 224, Sr.)
	31	Danny Perry (6-2, 244, Sr.)
K	38	Ross Gornall (5-11, 191, Fr.)
KR	9	Tristan Davis (5-10, 201, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	54	Quentin Groves (6-4, 254, Sr.)
	52	Antonio Coleman (6-2, 250, So.)
NG	97	Josh Thompson (6-0, 295, Sr.)
	99	Tex Doolittle (6-3, 292, Sr.)
T	95	Pat Sims (6-4, 304, Jr.)
	93	Mike Blanc (6-3, 274, Fr.)
E	94	Sen'Derrick Marks (6-2, 287, So.)
	49	Michael Goggans (6-3, 258, Fr.)
SLB	42	Patrick Trahan (6-2, 220, So.)
	56	Courtney Harden (6-0, 229, Jr.)
MLB	55	Merrill Johnson (6-0, 213, Jr.)
	59	Chris Evans (6-0, 220, Jr.)
WLB	26	Steve Gandy (6-2, 201, Jr.)
	46	Craig Stevens (6-3, 210, Fr.)
CB	20	Patrick Lee (6-0, 195, Sr.)
	6	Walter McFadden (6-0, 179, So.)
FS	2	Aairon Savage (5-11, 191, So.)
	17	Jonathan Vickers (6-2, 204, Jr.)
SS	33	Eric Brock (6-1, 204, Sr.)
	4	Zac Etheridge (6-0, 191, Fr.)
CB	24	Jonathan Wilhite (5-11, 182, Sr.)
	8	Jeraud Powers (5-9, 177, So.)
P	4	Ryan Shoemaker (6-0, 187, Fr.)
PR	27	Mario Fannin (5-11, 214, Fr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

CRIMSON TIDE

Seriously, just where do you think this is headed? More than 92,000 crazies show up for a glorified spring scrimmage—those in the know like to call it the A-Day spring game—under new Crimson Tide coach Nick Saban. Do you think these people will settle for 6-6?

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

The offense is 85 percent of what Saban used at LSU and another 15 percent of ideas from coordinator Major Applewhite. It's the Applewhite wrinkles—the shotgun sets with four and five wide receivers—that add intrigue to an otherwise conservative, run-based philosophy.

SKILL POSITIONS

It all begins with quarterback John Parker Wilson, a Plan B recruit who wasn't expected to develop into anything special—and did. Wilson started all 13 games last season for coach Mike Shula and played much better than given credit for, creating big expectations for his junior season. Wilson says he's more comfortable reading defenses and throwing from the shotgun, and that the offense will be completely different. The Tide needs to run consistently to increase Wil-



son's effectiveness. Four running backs showed potential in the spring, but it's clear Jimmy Johns and Terry Grant are the leaders. Saban has proved he's not afraid to use a freshman at tailback if needed.

Wide receivers DJ Hall and Keith Brown are underrated and dangerous, and Matt Caddell is a solid possession guy.

Quick hits

Stadium: Bryant-Denny (grass, 92,138)
Site: Tuscaloosa, Ala.
Coach: Nick Saban (1st year; 91-42-1 overall, 11 years)
Offensive coordinator: Major Applewhite (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Kevin Steele (1st year)
Last league title won: 1999. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2003.
2006 record: 6-7, 2-6/T4th SEC West
Independence Bowl: Lost to Oklahoma State, 31-24

Tight end Travis McCall wasn't utilized enough last year, but the new offense—and

Saban's propensity to throw to the tight end down the seams—should change that.

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB Terry Grant. Nick Saban likes to use two backs, one as the grinder, the other as a changeup. Grant was supposed to push projected starter Jimmy Johns but played better in the spring and now is atop the depth chart.

2 NT Brian Motley. The athletic redshirt freshman was moved in the spring from third-string center to first-string nose tackle, the most important position in Saban's 50 defense. How's that for pressure?

An SEC coach says ...

I don't think Mike Shula got enough credit for the job he did as a recruiter. I think everyone in coaching knew they were playing a lot of young guys last year and that this was going to be the year they were building toward. Ask any coach in this league, and he'll tell you that what happened to Coach Shula was wrong. He got a raw deal. He left it stocked for **Nick Saban** to come in and be successful. ... I like **John Parker Wilson**. We beat him up pretty good in our game last year, and he kept popping back up.

OFFENSIVE LINE Andre Smith fits the dominating left tackle mold and should be one of the nation's best linemen. The line as a unit struggled in pass protection last year—usually when the right side (opposite Smith) was overloaded by the defense. Tackles Chris Capps (shoulder) and B.J. Stabler (knee) missed spring drills with injuries—and a golden opportunity to learn and understand the new offense in live situations. Of the middle three, center Antoine Caldwell finally is on the verge of a big season, and guards Justin Britt and Marlon Davis are solid if not spectacular.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Saban has installed his 50 defense (three down linemen, four linebackers) that was so successful at LSU. The scheme is geared toward stopping the run but also can be very effective in blitz situations. At one point at LSU, Saban had more than 40 blitz packages.

FRONT SEVEN Welcome to Brian Motley's world. Before spring practice, he was a forgotten man on offense. Now he's the starting nose tackle, a guy Saban says can be a difference-maker right away. If he can command double-teams, it will leave talented ends Wallace Gilberry and Bobby Greenwood—both better pass rushers than run stoppers—in winnable situations on the interior. Brandon Deaderick has more size than Gilberry and Greenwood and will be part of the three-man rotation. Keith Saunders and Brandon Fanney played well this spring in the "Jack" linebacker spot—a hybrid posi-

tion that allows rotation from a three- to four-man front. Outside linebacker Ezekiel Knight gives the Tide more speed off the edge, and inside man Prince Hall is one of the SEC's best. Darren Mustin is the other starter. The reality: There's a serious gap between the two best players—Gilberry and Hall—and the rest of the front seven.

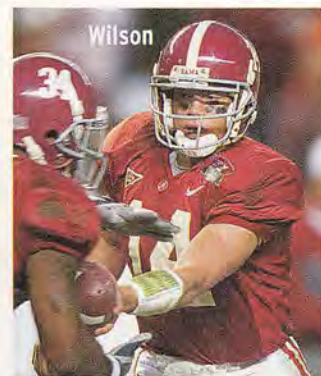
SECONDARY This unit is the strength of the defense. Simeon Castille has developed into the shutdown cornerback the team thought he could be. He's big and aggressive and he intimidates receivers. Lionell Mitchell, another physical corner, has yet to separate himself from Eric Grey. Freshman Kareem Jackson, an early enrollee, played well in the spring and also could push for playing time. Safety Rashad Johnson is a big hitter.

SPECIAL TEAMS Jamie Christensen and Leigh Tiffin will battle for the kicking job, and neither has an edge going into fall camp. Punter P.J. Fitzgerald is solid, and speedy Mississippi State transfer Jonathan Lowe and Javier Arenas will handle returns.

COACHING STAFF Alabama opened the checkbook, and Saban hired the best staff money could buy. He made a wise decision by grabbing Applewhite, a rising young assistant who could've had the Rice job had he stayed in Houston. Defensive coordinator Kevin Steele's days as the next in line at Florida State were thrown sideways when the staff in Tallahassee was restructured and he no longer was the marquee assistant.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Jimmy Johns	66	293	4.4	1	
John Parker Wilson	82	83	1.0	0	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
John Parker Wilson	216-379-10	2,707		17	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
DJ Hall	62	1,056	17.0	5	
Keith Brown	44	590	13.4	3	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Javier Arenas	49	630	12.9	2	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Jamie Christensen	17	18	13	17	56
Leigh Tiffin	12	13	8	13	36
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Prince Hall	46	31	77	10.5/28	
Simeon Castille	44	27	71	4.5/17	
Wallace Gilberry	22	21	43	10.5/31	
Sacks: Gilberry (3.5)					
Interceptions: Castille (6)					



MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Western Carolina		1-0
9-8	at Vanderbilt	13-10	5-0
9-15	Arkansas	23-24, 2OT	2-3
9-22	Georgia		3-2
9-29	vs. Florida State*		2-0-1
10-6	Houston		5-0
10-13	at Mississippi	26-23, OT	4-1
10-20	▲ Tennessee	13-16	2-3
11-3	■ LSU	14-28	1-4
11-10	at Mississippi State	16-24	4-1
11-17	La.-Monroe	41-7	1-0
11-24	● at Auburn	15-22	0-5

*at Jacksonville

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

SEC schedule strength: 9th

>The Series Auburn (38-32-1): Nick Saban knows the Tide has lost the last five Iron Bowls. This is his chance to re-establish the Tide as the premier team in the state and an elite program nationally.

>The Showdown vs. LSU: Let's just say there's bad blood between Saban and the school he led to the 2003 BCS title. This figures to be a defensive gem. Note: Saban was 4-1 vs. the Tide while at LSU.

>The Smack Restoring Tide Pride. That may be difficult. September is full of potential pitfalls. Even the game at Vandy. The Saban vs. Bobby Bowden matchup is a TV match-maker's dream. Saban has to stop the bleeding against Tennessee, which has won three of the last four vs. Bama.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	81	Keith Brown (6-3, 204, Sr.)
	11	Matt Caddell (5-11, 189, Sr.)
LT	71	Andre Smith (6-4, 348, So.)
	79	Drew Davis (6-6, 268, So.)
LG	50	Justin Britt (6-4, 290, Sr.)
	74	David Ross (6-2, 307, Fr.)
C	59	Antoine Caldwell (6-4, 288, Jr.)
	70	Evan Cardwell (6-2, 291, So.)
RG	76	Marlon Davis (6-2, 311, Jr.)
	68	Taylor Pharr (6-5, 265, Fr.)
RT	72	Chris Capps (6-7, 283, Sr.)
	78	Mike Johnson (6-6, 303, So.)
TE	83	Travis McCall (6-2, 264, Jr.)
	88	Nick Walker (6-5, 270, Jr.)
WR	22	DJ Hall (6-3, 186, Sr.)
	9	Nikita Stover (6-0, 204, Jr.)
QB	14	John Parker Wilson (6-2, 209, Jr.)
	17	Greg McElroy (6-2, 216, Fr.)
RB	29	Terry Grant (5-9, 184, Fr.)
	38	Glen Coffee (6-2, 225, So.)
FB	40	Baron Huber (6-4, 252, So.)
	30	Patrick Hanrahan (6-0, 245, Fr.)
K	86	Jamie Christensen (6-0, 183, Sr.)
KR	28	Javier Arenas (5-8, 176, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	92	Wallace Gilberry (6-4, 264, Sr.)
	90	Milton Talbert (6-2, 233, Fr.)
NT	66	Brian Motley (6-1, 284, Fr.)
	97	Lorenzo Washington (6-4, 285, So.)
E	93	Bobby Greenwood (6-5, 260, Jr.)
	95	Brandon Deaderick (6-4, 271, So.)
SLB	47	Ezekiel Knight (6-4, 238, Jr.)
	46	Zach Schreiber (6-1, 211, So.)
MLB	94	Keith Saunders (6-3, 248, Sr.)
	98	Brandon Fanney (6-5, 253, So.)
MLB	21	Prince Hall (5-11, 255, So.)
	45	Charlie Higgenbotham (5-10, 225, Fr.)
WLB	57	Darren Mustin (6-2, 237, Sr.)
	32	Eryk Anders (6-2, 221, So.)
LCB	2	Simeon Castille (6-1, 189, Sr.)
	3	Kareem Jackson* (5-11, 185, Fr.)
FS	49	Rashad Johnson (6-0, 186, Jr.)
	27	Justin Woodall (6-1, 213, So.)
SS	20	Marcus Carter (6-0, 200, Sr.)
	26	Ali Sharrief (5-9, 212, So.)
RCB	16	Lionell Mitchell (6-2, 184, Jr.)
	24	Marquis Johnson (5-11, 178, So.)
P	11	P.J. Fitzgerald (5-11, 188, So.)
PR	28	Javier Arenas (5-8, 176, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman



RAZORBACKS

Darren McFadden is back to chase the Heisman Trophy, and USC is off the schedule. But that doesn't mean Arkansas is assured of another 10-win season. Rebuilding must be done on both lines, and a passing offense must be developed. The defections of three popular, homegrown stars—Damian Williams (USC) and Mitch Mustain (USC) and offensive coordinator Gus Malzahn (Tulsa)—negated much of the good feelings brought about by the Hogs' 10-win season. Houston Nutt likely will need to win big again this season for his job to be secure.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Arkansas consistently has been one of the SEC's best rushing teams under Nutt, and the plan is to continue that trend and stay physical out of the I-formation. It also wants to throw more efficiently after ranking 108th in passing offense last year. A pro-style passing package is being installed by new coordinator David Lee.

SKILL POSITIONS McFadden and Felix Jones are the SEC's best tailback duo. McFadden is about speed and power, and Jones is quick and shifty. Both also are good receivers and kickoff returners. McFadden even has the added threat as a passer out of the "Wildcat" formation, in which he lines up at quarterback. Casey Dick is the team's only experienced quarterback still at the position, and he must stay healthy and continue to develop in the passing game. Marcus Monk is a big, physical

Quick hits

Stadiums: Razorback (grass, 72,000) and War Memorial (artificial, 53,715). **Sites:** Fayetteville, Ark., and Little Rock.

Coach: Houston Nutt (67-44, 9 years; 103-66 overall, 14 years)

Offensive coordinator: David Lee (1st year, 8th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Reggie Herring (3rd year)

Last league title won: 1989 (SWC).

Last year not in a bowl: 2005.

2006 record: 10-4, 7-1/1st SEC West.

SEC championship game: Lost to Florida, 38-28

Capital One Bowl: Lost to Wisconsin, 17-14



McFadden

MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 **OT Jose Valdez.** He can dunk a basketball and has the athleticism to go with his big body. Now he must show he can block well fundamentally on a consistent basis and protect quarterback Casey Dick's blindside.

2 **DE Malcolm Sheppard.** He steps into departed SEC sacks leader Jamaal Anderson's spot and brings power off the edge as a pass rusher. The team will need him to bring some heat on the quarterback.

An SEC coach says ...

You don't know who's at fault with those young players and Gus Malzahn leaving. The word we got was Malzahn was calling plays the first half of the season. And from about the Auburn game on, it was **Houston Nutt**—and should have been, given the strengths of the team. ... I don't think they'll miss QB Mitch Mustain, but I don't think **Casey Dick** is very good, either. ... With (coordinator) **Reggie Herring's** defense, you don't have to watch tape. You know you're going to get man coverage. They are aggressive, opportunistic and will blitz the heck out of you.

receiver. Wideout Robert Johnson, a former quarterback, should be ready for a good season after getting used to his new position. Fullback Peyton Hillis needs to stay healthy after struggling with a thigh injury last season.

OFFENSIVE LINE All-SEC center Jonathan Luigs and right guard Robert Felton are the two returning starters. Felton, who also can play tackle, is talented but must play with more consistency. Jose Valdez is taking over left tackle, where he played well in the Capital One Bowl after starter Tony Ugoh was injured. Mitch Petrus is at left guard after playing fullback last season. Right tackle Nate Garner has starting experience but must show he's ready to be a full-time starter. Run-blocking always has been a team strength, but the new starting group must be able to handle additional pass protections.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The team will continue to use a 4-3 defense under coordinator Reggie Herring but likely won't play as much press man-to-man coverage as last year because lockdown corner Chris Houston declared for the NFL draft. That means Herring will have to mix in zone coverage more often as the secondary develops.

FRONT SEVEN End Jamaal Anderson and tackle Keith Jackson moved on. A torn ligament in tackle Marcus Harrison's left knee put his status in question for 2007. Fellow tackle Ernest Mitchell, who became a starter last season when Harrison was slowed by injuries, is reliable. End Antwain Robinson returns and is strong against both the run and pass. Coaches love the athleticism and work ethic of end Malcolm Sheppard. Linebacker Freddie Fairchild has star ability but is coming off knee surgery. Middle linebacker Weston Dacus returns and adds stability to the defense. Redshirt freshman Ryan Powers, sidelined by a hamstring injury last season, is projected to take over at weakside linebacker. Powers has the speed, size and hitting ability coaches want in a linebacker but lacks experience.

SECONDARY Matt Hewitt played linebacker last year but should excel at strong safety with his combination of skills in run support and coverage. Free safety Michael Grant is speedy and has good coverage skills but is coming off knee surgery. Cornerback Jerrell Norton can anticipate and break on the ball, and solid-but-unspectacular corner Mattered Richardson has two seasons of starting experience.

SPECIAL TEAMS Incoming freshman kicker Alex Tejada, who has a strong and accurate leg, is being counted on to take over a role that has been a problem area. McFadden and Jones have a combined three kickoff returns for touchdowns and might return punts this season. Jeremy Davis, who was inconsistent as the kicker last season, likely will be the punter.

COACHING STAFF Lee has returned for his third stint as the team's quarterbacks coach but first as coordinator and play-caller. Lee, a Dallas Cowboys assistant the past four years, previously has worked with Nutt and other assistants, and the transition has been quick and easy.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Darren McFadden	284	1,647	5.8	14
Felix Jones	154	1,168	7.6	6

Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD
Casey Dick	65-132-6	991	9

Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Marcus Monk	50	962	19.2	11
Peyton Hillis	19	159	8.4	0

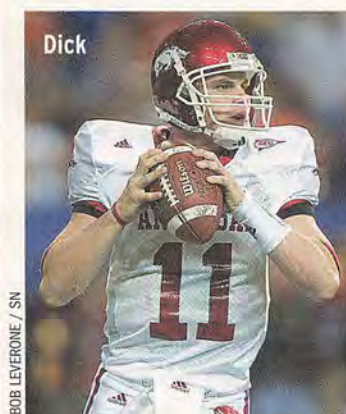
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Felix Jones	23	554	24.1	1

Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Jeremy Davis	46	48	6	13	64

Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.
Weston Dacus	59	36	95	8/33
Antwain Robinson	44	24	68	14.5/86
Matt Hewitt	32	31	63	3/10

Sacks: Robinson (8.5)

Interceptions: Michael Grant (3)



BOB LEVERONE / SN

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	85	Marcus Monk (6-6, 217, Sr.)
	81	Marques Wade (6-3, 184, Fr.)
LT	78	Jose Valdez (6-6, 310, Jr.)
	73	Ray Dominguez (6-5, 285, Fr.)
LG	46	Mitch Petrus (6-5, 288, Jr.)
	62	Michael Aguirre (6-6, 310, So.)
C	63	Jonathan Luigs (6-4, 305, Jr.)
	58	Joey Crossland (6-5, 325, So.)
RG	61	Robert Felton (6-4, 316, Sr.)
	65	DeMarcus Love (6-5, 304, Fr.)
RT	75	Nate Garner (6-6, 325, Sr.)
	72	Cody Green (6-6, 333, Jr.)
TE	82	Andrew Davie (6-6, 275, So.)
	86	Ben Cleveland (6-4, 235, So.)
WR	18	Robert Johnson (6-2, 210, Sr.)
	2	London Crawford (6-2, 200, So.)
QB	11	Casey Dick (6-2, 207, Jr.)
	17	Nathan Emert (6-2, 204, So.)
RB	5	Darren McFadden (6-2, 205, Jr.)
	25	Felix Jones (6-0, 200, Jr.)
FB	22	Peyton Hillis (6-2, 238, Sr.)
	33	Farod Jackson (6-0, 242, Sr.)
K	52	Brian Vavra (5-11, 175, Jr.)
KR	25	Felix Jones (6-0, 200, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Troy		1-0
9-15	at Alabama	24-23, 2OT	3-2
9-22	Kentucky		2-2
9-29	North Texas		5-0
10-6	UT-Chattanooga*		
10-13	▲ Auburn	27-10	2-3
10-20	at Mississippi	38-3	4-1
10-27	Fla. International		
11-3	● South Carolina	26-20	3-2
11-10	at Tennessee	31-14	2-3
11-17	Mississippi State*	28-14	5-0
11-23	■ at LSU^	26-31	1-4

*at Little Rock ^Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

SEC schedule strength: 12th

>The Series **LSU (17-33-2):** This didn't have the feel of a rivalry when the Hogs entered the SEC, but it has developed into a heated affair. Trying to keep up with the Bayou Bengals has made Arkansas better.

>The Showdown **vs. Auburn:**

Arkansas ambushed the Tigers last year, a win that helped propel the Hogs to their surprising season. Each team loves its running game, which means a quarterback might have to make a play to win the game.

>The Smack **Was last year a fluke?** A pathetic nonconference schedule means qualifying for a bowl is a no-brainer. But dreams of duplicating last year's magic ride will hinge on splitting SEC road games and going unbeaten at home.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
LE	96	Malcolm Sheppard (6-2, 255, So)
	40	Adrian Davis (6-4, 200, So.)
LT	90	Ernest Mitchell (6-2, 292, Jr.)
	98	Cord Gray (6-2, 290, Jr.)
RT	55	Marcus Harrison (6-3, 310, Sr.)
	95	Fred Bledsoe (6-3, 305, Sr.)
RE	97	Antwain Robinson (6-3, 255, Jr.)
	94	Chris Wade (6-6, 250, Sr.)
WLB	41	Ryan Powers (6-2, 198, Fr.)
	45	Desmond Williams (6-2, 210, Jr.)
MLB	30	Weston Dacus (6-2, 230, Sr.)
	47	Wendell Davis (6-1, 205, So.)
SLB	44	Freddie Fairchild (6-2, 222, So.)
	42	Chip Gregory (6-4, 207, Fr.)
RCB	9	Mattered Richardson (6-0, 195, Sr.)
	17	Shedrick Johnson (5-10, 185, Jr.)
FS	8	Michael Grant (5-11, 198, Sr.)
	3	Kevin Woods (5-10, 194, Sr.)
SS	31	Matt Hewitt (6-3, 205, Sr.)
	39	Matt Harris (6-2, 192, So.)
LCB	27	Jerrell Norton (6-1, 190, So.)
	29	Jamar Love (6-1, 195, Jr.)
P	50	Jeremy Davis (5-9, 210, Jr.)
PR	22	Peyton Hillis (6-2, 238, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

REBELS

SN projection **5th, 6-6**

National rank **54**

Quarterback play will be the wild card that determines whether the Rebels can stop competing to stay out of last place in the SEC West and start aspiring to higher things—like a winning season and a bowl. There is enough talent surrounding the quarterback position to reach such modest goals.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

The Rebels often line up in a two-back set; they'd rather run over you than throw it downfield.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL With four returning starters on the

Green-Ellis



MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES

line, led by tackle Michael Oher, and talent stockpiled at running back, Ole Miss should be able to play physical up front and

Quick hits

Stadium: Vaught-Hemingway (artificial, 60,580)

Site: Oxford, Miss.

Coach: Ed Orgeron (7-16, 2 years)

Offensive coordinator: Dan Werner (2nd year)

Defensive coordinator: John Thompson (1st year)

Last league title won: 1963. **Last bowl appearance:** 2003.

2006 record: 4-8, 2-6/T4th SEC West

Returning leaders: Rushing—BenJarvus Green-Ellis (234 att., 1,000 yards, 7 TDs). Passing—Brent Schaeffer (115-244-10, 1,442 yards, 9 TDs). Receiving—Mike Wallace (24 rec., 410 yards, 2 TDs).

impose its will on some opponents. BenJarvus Green-Ellis, the SEC's third-leading rusher last season, is a no-nonsense, straight-ahead runner who makes the most of small holes and seldom loses yardage. Brent Schaeffer struggled at quarterback last season, and it may have cost him his job. Seth Adams can't match Schaeffer's arm strength and running skills, but Adams is steady and makes fewer mistakes. Adams clearly was ahead of Schaeffer at the end of spring practice, but coach Ed Orgeron didn't name Adams the starter. Clearly, a message was sent to Schaeffer. The receiving corps will get a lift from junior college transfer A.J. Jackson. The best receivers coming out of the spring—Marshay Green and Dexter McCluster—are fast but small. Tight end Robert Lane has the best hands on the team, and the Rebels need to throw to him more.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY New coordinator John Thompson will tweak Orgeron's 4-3 scheme with more pressure packages. A key will be disguising the blitzes and keeping opponents off-balance.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Linebacker Jonathan Cornell will get the first shot at replacing Patrick Willis, who won the Butkus Award last season. Junior college transfer Tony Fein also is expected to make an impact. With three new starters at linebacker, that unit will rely heavily on help from a line that was riddled with

injuries last year. If Peria Jerry and Jeremy Garrett stay healthy, the line will be good. Dustin Mouzon and Cassius Vaughn are new starters at cornerback, but the Rebels return a playmaker at strong safety in Jamarca Sanford.

SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Joshua Shene was a freshman All-American last year. Coverage units were productive, and the return game should be better with the explosive McCluster returning from injury.

COACHING STAFF Thompson knows all about the SEC, having coached at Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, South Carolina and LSU. He will make the calls on defense, but work closely with Orgeron. Staff chemistry improved last year with the addition of offensive line coach Art Kehoe and offensive coordinator Dan Werner from Miami.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	80	Shay Hodge (6-1, 195, So.)
	40	Mico McSwain (6-1, 203, Jr.)
LT	74	Michael Oher (6-5, 325, Jr.)
	63	Terry Freeman (6-3, 330, Jr.)
LG	71	Reid Neely (6-6, 300, So.)
	50	Darryl Harris (6-4, 300, Sr.)
C	51	Corey Actis (6-5, 290, Sr.)
	60	Thomas Eckers (6-2, 300, Sr.)
RG	77	John Jerry (6-5, 360, So.)
	65	Mark Jean-Louis (6-2, 360, So.)
RT	79	Maurice Miller (6-3, 350, Jr.)
	76	Marcus Cohen (6-5, 290, Sr.)
TE	15	Robert Lane (6-3, 240, Sr.)
	85	Robert Hough (6-4, 230, Sr.)
WR	22	Dexter McCluster (5-9, 165, So.)
	21	Marshay Green (5-10, 170, So.)
QB	19	Seth Adams (6-4, 225, Sr.)
	7	Brent Schaeffer (6-2, 205, Sr.)
RB	6	BenJarvus Green-Ellis (5-11, 225, Sr.)
	23	Bruce Hall (5-11, 210, Sr.)
FB	44	Jason Cook (6-0, 240, Jr.)
	43	Andy Hartmann (5-10, 230, So.)
K	93	Joshua Shene (5-9, 170, So.)
KR	22	Dexter McCluster (5-9, 165, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	92	Marcus Tillman (6-4, 260, So.)
	56	Vicente DeLoach (6-3, 260, Sr.)
T	98	Peria Jerry (6-2, 300, Jr.)
	90	Brandon Jenkins (6-4, 300, Sr.)
NT	54	Jeremy Garrett (6-1, 290, Sr.)
	72	Daverin Gerald (6-2, 305, So.)
E	46	Kentrell Lockett (6-5, 225, Fr.)
	86	Greg Hardy (6-5, 255, So.)
SLB	33	Antonio Turner (6-1, 235, Jr.)
	20	Ashlee Palmer (6-2, 214, Jr.)
MLB	42	Jonathan Cornell (6-1, 220, So.)
	41	Brandon Thomas (5-11, 245, Jr.)
WLB	45	Jamie Phillips (6-0, 220, So.)
	9	Allen Walker (6-1, 200, Fr.)
CB	35	Cassius Vaughn (5-11, 180, So.)
	28	Nate Banks (5-11, 180, Sr.)
FS	1	Kendrick Lewis (6-0, 185, So.)
	5	Terrell Jackson (5-10, 200, Jr.)
SS	13	Jamarca Sanford (5-10, 200, Jr.)
	16	Markeith Summers (6-2, 190, Fr.)
CB	12	Dustin Mouzon (5-11, 175, Jr.)
	17	Rob Campbell (5-10, 160, So.)
P	36	Rob Park (6-0, 185, Jr.)
PR	21	Marshay Green (5-10, 170, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at Memphis	28-25
9-8	Missouri	7-34
9-15	at Vanderbilt	17-10
9-22	Florida	
9-29	at Georgia	9-14
10-6	Louisiana Tech	
10-13	▲ Alabama	23-26, OT
10-20	Arkansas	3-38
10-27	at Auburn	17-23
11-3	Northwestern State	27-7
11-17	■ LSU	20-23, OT
11-23	● at Mississippi State*	20-17

*Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

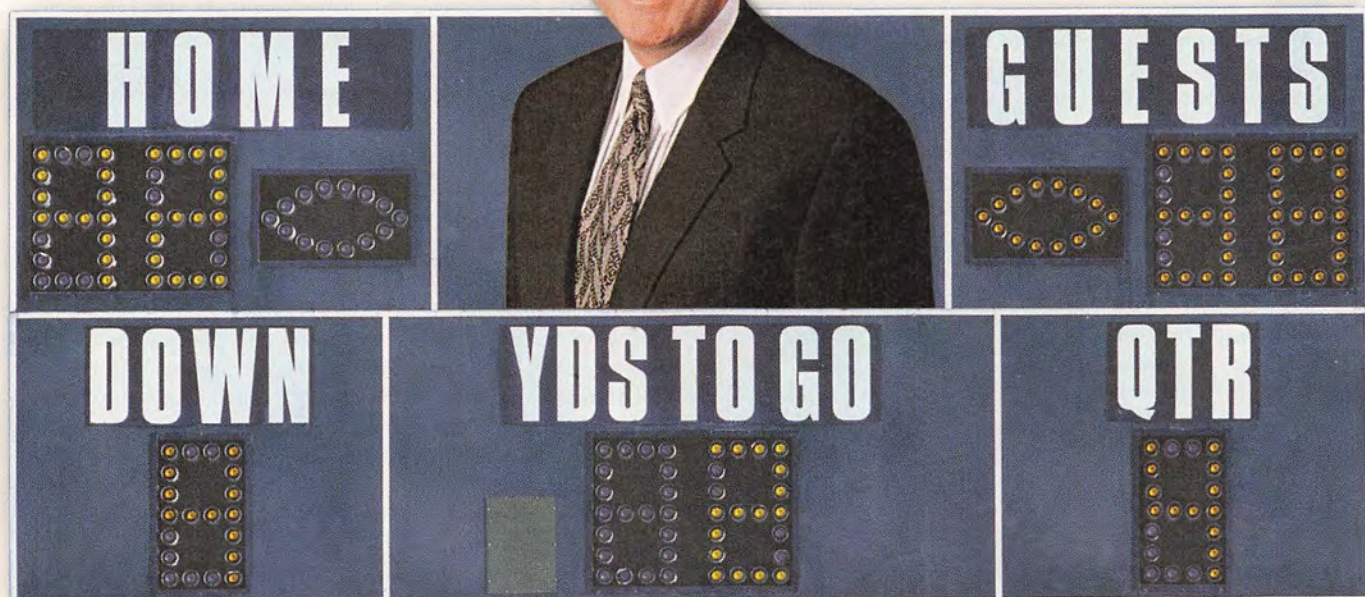
SEC schedule strength: 11th

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 **G Reid Neely.** He's a big sophomore (6-6, 300 pounds) who hopes to step into the one opening on an experienced line. Neely has the agility to be a good pulling guard for the running game.

2 **MLB Jonathan Cornell.** This physical sophomore will get first crack at replacing All-American Patrick Willis. If necessary, he's also versatile enough to move outside. Either way, Cornell should make an impact.

ON TOP OF HIS GAME.



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MISSISSIPPI STATE

BULLDOGS

SN projection **6th, 3-9**National rank **86**

The rebuilding mantra is getting old for a program that has three straight three-win seasons under fourth-year coach Sylvester Croom, but there is hope in 2007. The team returns 14 starters after suffering four three-point losses. If an offense with nine returning players can overcome a defense that has to fill holes at several key spots, there is a realistic shot at .500.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The multiple, pro-style offense Croom brought in after 17

years as an NFL assistant thrives on precision passing. A running game that averaged only 2.9 yards per attempt



Dixon

BOB LEVERONE / SN

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	81	Brandon McRae (6-4, 200, So.)
	87	Aubrey Bell (6-3, 220, Jr.)
LT	77	Mike Brown (6-3, 300, Jr.)
	74	Mark Melichar (6-5, 275, Fr.)
LG	53	Anthony Strauder (6-3, 295, Jr.)
	70	J.C. Brignone (6-1, 290, Fr.)
C	76	Royce Blackledge (6-4, 293, Sr.)
	58	Johnny Carpenter (6-2, 285, So.)
RG	60	J.D. Hamilton (6-4, 295, Sr.)
	78	Michael Gates (6-4, 305, Jr.)
RT	75	Craig Jenkins (6-4, 315, So.)
	74	Mark Melichar (6-5, 275, Fr.)
TE	88	Eric Butler (6-3, 255, Sr.)
	48	Dezmond Sherrod (6-3, 245, Sr.)
WR	4	Tony Burks (6-4, 217, Sr.)
	89	Jamaye Smith (6-0, 183, Jr.)
QB	7	Michael Henig (6-1, 190, Jr.)
	17	Josh Riddell (6-1, 195, Jr.)
RB	24	Anthony Dixon (6-1, 240, So.)
		Justin Williams (5-10, 207, Sr.)
FB	35	Brandon Hart (5-11, 235, Jr.)
	84	Jeremy Jones (6-2, 275, Jr.)
K	37	Adam Carlson (6-4, 195, Jr.)
KR	3	Derek Pegues (5-10, 192, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	54	Titus Brown (6-3, 250, Sr.)
	92	Charles Burns (6-3, 262, Jr.)
T	90	Cortez McCraney (6-4, 262, Jr.)
	95	Kyle Love (6-1, 320, So.)
T	94	Jessie Bowman (6-1, 315, Jr.)
	99	Quinton Wesley (6-4, 300, So.)
E	51	Avery Hannibal (6-1, 245, Sr.)
	93	Brandon Cooper (6-3, 240, Fr.)
SLB	5	Gabe O'Neal (6-1, 220, Sr.)
	10	Dominic Douglas (6-2, 217, Jr.)
MLB	22	Jamar Chaney (6-1, 236, Jr.)
	39	Tim Bailey (6-3, 241, Jr.)
WLB	36	Jamon Hughes (6-0, 230, So.)
	56	Anthony Littlejohn (6-2, 225, Jr.)
CB	11	Anthony Johnson (5-10, 194, So.)
	9	Keon Humphries (5-10, 180, Jr.)
FS	3	Derek Pegues (5-10, 192, Jr.)
	6	Demario Bobo (6-0, 180, Jr.)
SS	8	De'Mon Clanton (6-1, 190, Jr.)
	1	Keith Fitzhugh (5-11, 206, Jr.)
CB	18	Marcus Washington (5-10, 180, So.)
	28	Tay Bowser (6-3, 185, So.)
P	43	Blake McAdams (5-10, 190, Jr.)
PR	3	Derek Pegues (5-10, 192, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Davis Wade (grass, 55,082). **Site:** Starkville, Miss.
Coach: Sylvester Croom (9-25, 3 years)
Offensive coordinator: Woody McCorvey (4th year)
Defensive coordinator: Ellis Johnson (4th year)

Last league title won: 1941. **Last bowl appearance:** 2000.

2006 record: 3-9, 1-7/6th SEC West

Returning leaders: Rushing—Anthony Dixon (169 att., 668 yards, 9 TDs).
 Passing—Michael Henig (74-169-9, 1,201 yards, 7 TDs). Receiving—Tony Burks (35 rec., 850 yards, 5 TDs).

could become more involved this season with sophomore tailback Anthony Dixon and touted recruit Robert Elliott.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Michael Henig is a strong-armed quarterback who appears capable of winning. Henig, who was hurt much of last season, had a good spring, but Croom now has an insurance policy in junior college transfer Josh Riddell. Dixon, at 240 pounds, is bigger than his fullback, Brandon Hart. The Bulldogs outrecreated Ole Miss for Elliott, who has big-play potential. Tony Burks leads a capable group of receivers, and the line, with depth behind four returning starters, is in its best shape of the Croom era.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The 4-3 scheme depends on good play from the front wall with opportunistic pressure from the remainder of the unit.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Defense often kept the Bulldogs in games last season, but heavy losses on the line and at linebacker could make things difficult. Talented end Titus Brown is back, but he is the lone returning starter up front. The progress of junior college All-American tackle Jessie Bowman will be critical. Jamar Chaney and Gabe O'Neal give the Bulldogs playmaking potential at linebacker, but the team will have to adjust to the loss of Quinton Culberson. Look for transfer Dominic Douglas to make a quick impact. Safeties

Keith Fitzhugh and Derek Pegues are experienced, but the corners will be untested. Pegues, a good athlete, is moving to safety after starting at cornerback last year.

SPECIAL TEAMS This 2006 problem unit will be taken over by Reed Stringer, who also coaches tight ends. Kicker Adam Carlson and punter Blake McAdams return. Carlson was 6-for-12 on field goal attempts last season; McAdams' punting average dipped from 41.9 yards to 38.2. Return man Pegues gives the Bulldogs a home-run threat.

COACHING STAFF There are four new assistants, including Rocky Felker, a former Bulldogs head coach who returns to coach running backs. Croom might not need to get the Bulldogs to a bowl to save his job, but another three-victory season probably would trigger a coaching change.

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
8-30	■ LSU*	17-47
9-8	at Tulane	29-32
9-15	at Auburn	0-34
9-22	Gardner-Webb	35-3
9-29	at South Carolina	0-15
10-6	UAB	16-10, OT
10-13	Tennessee	
10-20	at West Virginia	14-42
10-27	at Kentucky	31-34
11-10	▲ Alabama	24-16
11-17	at Arkansas*	14-28
11-24	● Mississippi*	17-20

*Thursday ▲ at Little Rock *Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

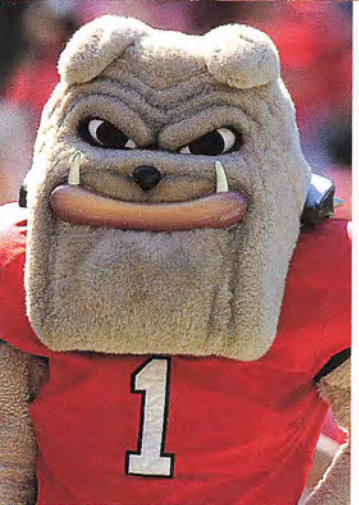
SEC schedule strength: 4th



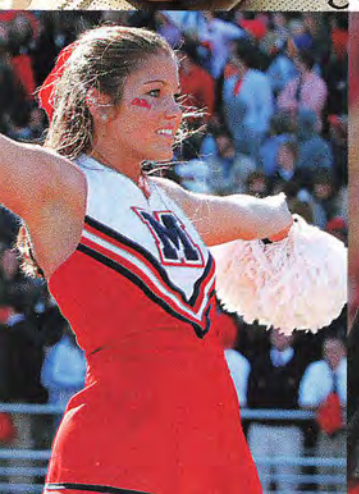
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 WR Brandon McRae. This sophomore could shine after sitting out last year as a transfer. McRae led Morehead State in receiving as a freshman and now wants to show he can play with the big boys in the SEC.

2 DE Avery Hannibal. The hard-working senior, a career backup, played well in the spring and finally will get his chance to start. Hannibal will be expected to provide leadership on the rebuilt line.



DEEP INSIDE THE SEC





Spurrier

Smack

These guys all know what they're talking about—they just don't agree on much

What's a little e-mail smack among friends? It's not just that Matt Hayes, Tom Dienhart and Mike Huguenin are college football fans, they are college football—and SEC—experts who regularly talk to the movers and shakers around the league. Of course, they talk to different movers and shakers, but even if they didn't, our three gridheads would end up a few sidelines apart in their opinions. Actually, even when they agree, it doesn't sound like it. You'll see. We'll just throw out a few questions and let the e-mail trail take off.

Is the SEC the best conference?

Dienhart: Is the Pope Catholic? Sorry, maybe that one doesn't work so well in SEC country. How 'bout this: Does a bear live in the woods? A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and the SEC's weakest link is Mississippi State. That's the strongest weak link in any BCS conference. I hope all the questions are this easy.

Huguenin: Top to bottom, on an almost-annual basis, the SEC is the best league. That's in terms of passion, players, coaches, attention—everything.

Hayes: Enough already. Your "best" conference has barely better than an average bowl record over the last decade. The SEC is good, yes. Head and shoulders better? Forget it.

Huguenin: So what's better—the Big Ten? The Big 12? Surely not the Pac-10 or ACC? Besides, using bowl records as a measuring stick for league strength is beyond absurd. One bowl matters each season. *One.* That's the national title game. The others are pleasant diversions, and it's understandable if a team doesn't show up and play its best.

Hayes: Uh, Mikey? Please leave your Tide box and toilet roll at the door. Since most SEC schools are afraid of real non-conference games, we're left with bowls to dissect the differences between leagues. Hence— isn't that a great word?—hence, the relevance of every bowl. Now go whine about your playoff somewhere else.

But could the SEC get better? What about dumping Vandy and adding Louisville?

Dienhart: Hey, the SEC needs Vandy and its mortarboard to bolster the league's sports-crazed image. And why jettison the 'Dores now when they're poised for a breakthrough? There's no reason to think a tiny private school that clutches its backpack can't win big. Witness Wake Forest. There already are a lot of Louisvilles in the SEC. They're called Kentucky, Auburn, Alabama, Arkansas, etc., sports-obsessed schools with skewed priorities.

Tuberville

TODD VAN ERNST

Meet the guys

■ Tom Dienhart, an associate editor for Sporting News and regular college football columnist on SportingNews.com, has covered college football for 17 years.
■ Matt Hayes, the College Football Insider columnist for Sporting News, has covered college football for 16 years.
■ Mike Huguenin, an assistant sports editor who supervises pro football and college sports coverage at the Orlando Sentinel, is a former college football columnist for Sporting News. He has covered college football for 22 years.

Huguenin: The SEC is fine the way it is. Vandy isn't good. But what about all the other sports? Dumping the 'Dores would be awful.

Hayes: If Vandy gets dumped, we might as well put Ole Miss and Mississippi State on probation, too. And without Spurrier, South Carolina is a nice party caboose.

Is Spurrier the best coach in the SEC?

Huguenin: Of course. Teams worry about playing South Carolina now. Think about that: *Teams worry about playing South Carolina now.*

Dienhart: If this were the 1990s, Hugues would be right. Who's the SEC's daddy? It's Nick Saban. Florida guys don't want to admit that because they know what's coming—a Crimson Tide of titles.

Hayes: Look, I'm a Spurrier guy. But anyone who doesn't think Urban Meyer is the best coach in the league—he won a national title with Chris Leak, people—needs his head examined.

Dienhart: Matty, I've been looking for a way to tell you this for years: It's time to switch to decaf.

Now that Saban is in Alabama, is Tommy Tuberville sunk in his own state?

Huguenin: Yeah, I'm sure he's quaking in his boots. No, he's not sunk. Tuberville is an excellent coach and has a good staff, and they'll get their share of in-state recruits and do a good job on game day with the guys they get. Actually, with Saban in the state, Tuberville automatically becomes the "good-guy coach" for the media, and that means something.

Dienhart: Tubs isn't afraid of anyone—this guy survived a coup. If anything, I expect Saban to bring out the best in Tubs.

Hayes: In case anyone asks, Tubs has a winning record vs. The Nicktator. That's all I have to say about that.

Which quarterback will finish this season at the top of the heap: Tim Tebow, Matthew Stafford or Erik Ainge?

Huguenin: Ainge is a good college quarterback, and I don't think he can be anything more. That leaves Stafford and Tebow. I think Tebow has better receivers—far

better receivers—and that's going to help. Still, as a pure passer, I think Stafford will be better. I guess in a roundabout way, I'm saying Stafford.

Hayes: Stafford clearly is the most talented, has the most upside and has the best teacher-coach in Mark Richt. Ainge? Win a big game. Tebow? Throw the ball when the defense knows it's coming.

Dienhart: Save me a seat on the Stafford bandwagon, too. But all three of these golden boys are chasing Kentucky's Andre Woodson. He was the best last year. And I think he may end up being the best this year.

Huguenin: Woodson had a great season last year, but I'm not sure anybody truly noticed.

Dienhart: I think Tommy Bowden noticed. So did Richt.

Well, if Florida can win a national basketball championship, why can't Kentucky win a football title?

Hayes: It's all about the players. One or two elite players can lead on a big NCAA hoops tournament run. One or two elite football players translates to a 4-8 season and a fired coach.

Huguenin: Kentucky's recruiting base for football is weak. The state of Kentucky produces, what, 10 legit Division I-A prospects each season? And not many out-of-state studs are clamoring to play football at UK. The day UK wins the national title in football is the day about 50 percent of Division I-A is on probation and can't go bowling.

Dienhart: What is this, the Flat Earth Society? Of course, it can happen at Kentucky. The key: getting the right coach who can convince elite recruits from

across the map to sign on. There's lots to sell at a big-budget state school: rabid fans, nice facilities, a great league with exposure, a beautiful city and campus.

Huguenin: What elite coach is going to coach at UK? Oops—what elite *football* coach? The last time the Wildcats were really good was in 1976-77—and they cheated to get that good.

We're all the way to the end, and we've barely mentioned Tennessee. Have the Vols become irrelevant?

Dienhart: The Vols haven't won the SEC since —what?—1998. Shameful. I think that answers the question. Next!

Huguenin: I'm going Clintonesque on you—who's to say what "irrelevant" means? Is Tennessee a good program? Of course. An elite program? No, not right now.

Hayes: More than anything, this program hasn't adjusted with the game's nuances.

It's stale.

Huguenin: You wonder what will happen to Phil Fulmer if the Vols go 8-4 or even 9-3 this season, with another "lesser" bowl.

Hayes: I'm gonna go all Bushesque on you guys: Vols fans will go "new-clear-er".

Dienhart: Yep. If Big Phil goes back to the Peach Bowl, it's the same as going 0-12. Then, he'll be gone and have plenty of time to check out all of the Waffle Houses throughout the Southeast. Wish I could go with him. We'd sit at the counter ... **SN**



Meyer



ALABAMA

Will the coaching changes be a good thing for John Parker Wilson?

>> How about this: Wilson could be the best quarterback to play for the Tide. Ever. He's that talented. Lost in the weird 2006 season was Wilson's emergence. He showed poise, arm strength and grit. Now he needs to be polished and refined, and offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Major Applewhite is one of the game's best young teachers. As a grad assistant at Texas, Applewhite helped make Vince Young a better, more confident passer. Imagine what Applewhite will be able to do with Wilson, who is much further along as a thrower than Young was at a similar age. Expect big things from Wilson this season. —Matt Hayes

>> Absolutely not. When was the last time a quarterback flourished under Nick Saban? Exactly. Saban is a defense-minded coach who demands one thing from his offense: Don't screw up. Wilson knows this and he will play scared silly, not wanting to make mistakes. Doesn't matter who the quarterbacks coach is, I'm guessing the most important tasks

given to Wilson will be perfecting the art of the quarterback-center exchange and handing off. Don't expect him to make Bama fans forget about Bart Starr, Joe Namath, Richard Todd—or even Andrew Zow. —Tom Dienhart

Number that counts 6

The six previous coaches (who actually got on the field) since Bear Bryant have averaged six wins in Season 1. If Nick Saban hits the average, he'll be in the hot seat in Season 2.

DEEP INSIDE

One huge change from last season: QB **John Parker Wilson** will be free to change calls at the line of scrimmage. He is more comfortable in the spread offense, and pre- and post-snap reads are quicker in the shotgun. ... As productive as Ken Darby was at Alabama, he probably played more than he should have last season. At least, backup **Jimmy Johns** should have played more. Johns has the burst and bruising north-south running style that Darby had before his various injuries. Now if Johns can go to class and stay eligible (he had problems with this in the spring). ... New offensive coordinator **Major Applewhite** likes to feature one receiver, so expect WR **DJ Hall** to have a big season. Rice wide receiver Jarrett Dillard had 35 catches and five touchdowns in 2005; in one season playing in Applewhite's offense, Dillard's numbers jumped to 91 catches and 21 touchdowns.

SCOUT TAKES

OT **Andre Smith** is a man. He and **Chris Capps** are a fantastic duo; the rest of the line is solid. ... By the end of last season **Jimmy Johns** was a more consistent tailback than Ken Darby. Nick likes to feed his tailbacks, and Johns has the body and frame to handle 25 carries a game. ... I can't wait to see what **Major Applewhite** does with that passing game. QB **John Parker Wilson** is very talented, and those receivers—**DJ Hall** and **Keith Brown**—are quick, tough kids. This offense should be one of the top three in the SEC. ... Wherever Nick has been in college, he has had a star player on the line, at linebacker and at cover corner. He works his defense around it, and he has it now with DE **Wallace Gilberry**, LB **Prince Hall** and CB **Simeon Castille**. All three will be among the best at their spots in the SEC.

Hall

1 BIG THING

Beat Auburn. It's just that simple. The Tigers never have won six straight, and if their current run is snapped at five, all is well again in T-Town. If not...



ARKANSAS

Jones

Number that counts **8**

Winnable home games. The Hogs must win out at home—or take a giant step backward.

DEEP INSIDE

As effective as the Wildcat formation—TB **Darren McFadden** playing quarterback in the shotgun—was last season, **Houston Nutt** wants to get away from it this fall so McFadden won't have to hit the front seven without a lead blocker. But all of that depends on QB **Casey Dick** and the passing game. If the passing game continues to struggle, both McFadden and **Felix Jones** will run the Wildcat.

... The staff is excited about DE **Malcolm Sheppard**, who came on strong at the end of last season. He still is a bit undersized for the position and hasn't grasped the nuances of the position, but he's quick off the edge. ... CB **Jerell Norton** is the next big star in the Arkansas secondary. He's aggressive and gets beat as much as he makes big plays—but so did Chris Houston early in his career. Houston worked out fairly well the last two seasons.

SCOUT TAKES

Someone please explain to the people of Arkansas that their coach does more with less than just about anyone in the country. With a little consistency in the passing game, the Hogs will be playing for the West title again in the last week of the season. ... Sophomore DT **Earnest Mitchell** plays hard every snap. A classic combo of run stuffer-pass rusher. ... C **Jonathan Luigs** is one of the top five linemen in the league. He's one of those guards you can't wait to see pull and get a big head of steam and knock someone on their tail. ... Funny thing about RB **Darren McFadden**, if you look at his legs, you'd never guess he was so strong. He's got chicken legs. Boy, he is some kind of player. ... I don't think you'll find a running back in better shape than **Felix Jones**. He'd run for 1,500-plus for just about any other Division I school. ... LB **Matt Hewitt** isn't very big, but this team has a history of undersized guys flourishing at the position.

1 BIG THING

If the Hogs can throw it—even a little—how in the world can anyone stop the tailback duo of Darren McFadden and Felix Jones?

Will offseason turmoil doom Houston Nutt and the Hogs?

>> This is what Nutt gets for his loyalty: run out of town by Little League parents/fans. The

only way Nutt can survive the offseason drama would be with another West Division title. And you can forget about that. Bottom line: Say what you want about Nutt's flirting with Nebraska and LSU, but he never left the school he loves. Memo to wacko Hogs fans: good luck finding another coach who can do more with less. —Matt Hayes

>> Let the good times roll.

Things are about to get really good. The Hogs are coming off an SEC West title and boast the best player in the nation in Darren McFadden. But this is what makes me think big: Meddlesome A.D. Frank Broyles is about to clear out

his office. Watch Nutt gain power in the transition. The soap opera of the last few years is in Nutt's rear view mirror. His only focus is on making Arkansas great. —Tom Dienhart

BIG



AUBURN

Are the Tigers' receivers good enough to help Brandon Cox?

>> Well, I'll just say this: It can't be much worse than last season. It's not like the Tigers don't have the talent at wide receiver. Rod Smith has All-SEC potential, and Montez Billings and Tim Hawthorne are rangy, speed athletes who need only game experience. The focus in the offseason was winning individual battles and being more physical at the line of scrimmage. That will translate to success in the passing game. —*Matt Hayes*

BIG ?

>> They won't be. And it doesn't matter anyway. Did you watch these "pass catchers" last season? Abysmal. Time and again, Auburn failed to turn third downs into first downs because of poor play by the wideouts. The receivers' general indifference also played a big role in the offense's inability to generate big plays consistently. Look, Cox is a guy who needs all the help he can get. Too bad his receivers won't deliver it—again. —*Tom Dienhart*

1 BIG THING

Throw earlier in each series. The Tigers can't keep putting over-achieving quarterback Brandon Cox in difficult down-and-distance situations because of a predictable run-first philosophy.



Marks

MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES

SCOUT TAKES

It's fun to watch DE **Quentin Groves**. He gets overpowered too much against the run, but watch him in pass situations. He cannot be blocked without help, and he keeps inventing new moves. He'll have double-digit sacks. ... QB **Brandon Cox** really regressed last season. Some of it was a lack of protection and some was a lack of quality receivers. But good quarterbacks rise above that and play through it. It's almost like he gave up late in the season. ... They're not developing quality receivers because that's not the philosophy of the offense. They throw to the tight end nearly as much as the receivers. ... S **Aairon Savage** is going to be a good player, but except for him, that secondary is very average and very vulnerable. They're fortunate they're very good in the front seven, or it would get ugly against teams that can throw. ... DLs **Josh Thompson** and **Sen'Derrick Marks** aren't the most athletic duo in the league, but there are few better at stuffing the run.

DEEP INSIDE

The defensive front will be fantastic if **Sen'Derrick Marks** adjusts to the switch from tackle to end. He played well last season on the interior but was moved outside near the end of spring drills so the team could get its best four linemen—Marks, Ts **Josh Thompson** and **Pat Sims** and All-American E **Quentin Groves**—on the field at the same time. Sims made huge strides and has the potential to be a star run-stuffer. ... QB **Brandon Cox** struggled last season because the team couldn't protect him. The tackle combination of **King Dunlap** and **Andrew McCain** is solid, but the middle three is shaky. ... LB **Tray Blackmon** clearly is the team's best athlete, but can't stay out of trouble off the field. He wasn't enrolled in the spring but was expected back this fall. That would give the Tigers' iffy linebacker corps a huge boost.

Number that counts 35

Sacks allowed last season. Quarterback Brandon Cox's difficulties can be traced directly to the lack of protection.

SCOUT TAKES

I want to see QB **Tim Tebow** go through his progressions and make the right read when everyone in the park knows he's throwing the ball. That's when we'll know how good a passer he is. ... DE **Derrick Harvey** played better than Jarvis Moss all last season but got little credit for it. He could've left after last season and been a first-round pick. ... I can't wait to see WR **Percy Harvin** healthy. He's not a fragile kid; he's tough and can take a pounding. ... The offensive line has been average, but they got some young guys—**Mo Hurt**, **Carl Johnson**, **Ronnie Wilson**—who are going to be big-time players. ... This team has the talent to replace nine starters on defense. What they don't have is the ability to replace the leadership of Reggie Nelson and Brandon Siler. ... TE **Cornelius Ingram** is a fantastic player. They don't use that position much, but I'd run specific sets to get him the ball.

Will Tim Tebow sink or swim now that he's the man?

>> Not only will Tebow thrive, he'll revolutionize the position. He's big, he's strong, he's cocky. You know he can run, but he'll show you he can pass, too. Heck, he's even good-looking. He's also about to become the best quarterback in the nation. Chris Leak's departure removed the final hurdle to Tebow's ascent to stardom. Now that he's taking every snap, Tebow's decision-making will get better. Scary, huh? Couple that with his already unmatched package of skills, and you have the makings of a Heisman winner. Yeah, a *Heisman* winner. —Tom Dienhart

BIG

Despite the personnel moves in spring practice, the team isn't finished tinkering with its cornerbacks. The team wants four it can count on. Reserve RB **Marcus Manson** and freshman WR **Joe Haden** have moved to the position, and there will be more moves in fall camp. Projected starters **Wondy Pierre-Louis** and **Markihe Anderson** failed to establish themselves in the spring. ...

DEEP INSIDE

The defensive line, a key area of concern, got some help in the spring from redshirt freshman DE **Lawrence Marsh**. A burly, deceptively quick end who can also play inside, the Gators need Marsh to take double teams from star DE **Derrick Harvey**. ... The Gators want to use freshman RB **Chris Rainey** much like they used WR/RB **Percy Harvin** last season, although the diminutive Rainey (5-9, 165 pounds) won't get as many carries at tailback. Some on the staff feel Rainey may have better game speed than Harvin, who is one of the nation's fastest players.

Number that counts 75

Touches for dynamic WR/RB Percy Harvin in an injury-marred freshman season. The staff wants to triple his number of touches (5.4 per game last season).



Harvin

ALBERT DICKSON / SN

1 BIG THING

The staff needs to be patient with the revamped defense, which will be loaded with talented freshmen and sophomores.



FLORIDA

SCOUT TAKES

Love **Matthew Stafford**, absolutely love the kid. Great arm, great physical ability and desire, and more than anything, the moxie intangible that every team needs from its quarterback. Watch how big of a step he takes this year under **Mark Richt**, who doesn't get enough credit for how he prepares quarterbacks. ... Give RB **Kregg Lumpkin** the ball 25 times a game and ride him. He has the ability, and there are no lingering affects from the ACL surgery two years ago. ... You see a lot of heralded receivers go to Georgia, but for whatever reason, they just don't develop. The receivers dropped way too many balls last season. Getting WR **Sean Bailey** back (knee injury last season) will help, but WR **Mohamed Massaquoi** has to be more consistent. ... **Jeff Owens** and **Kade Weston**, the two interior guys on the defensive front, are all-star caliber—classic run stuffers similar to the type of defensive tackles Georgia has produced for the last decade.

More good news for blossoming QB **Matthew Stafford** is the improvement of WR **Mikey Henderson**, who no longer is simply a threat in the return game. Henderson has become more consistent in route running and has finally embraced the position. He

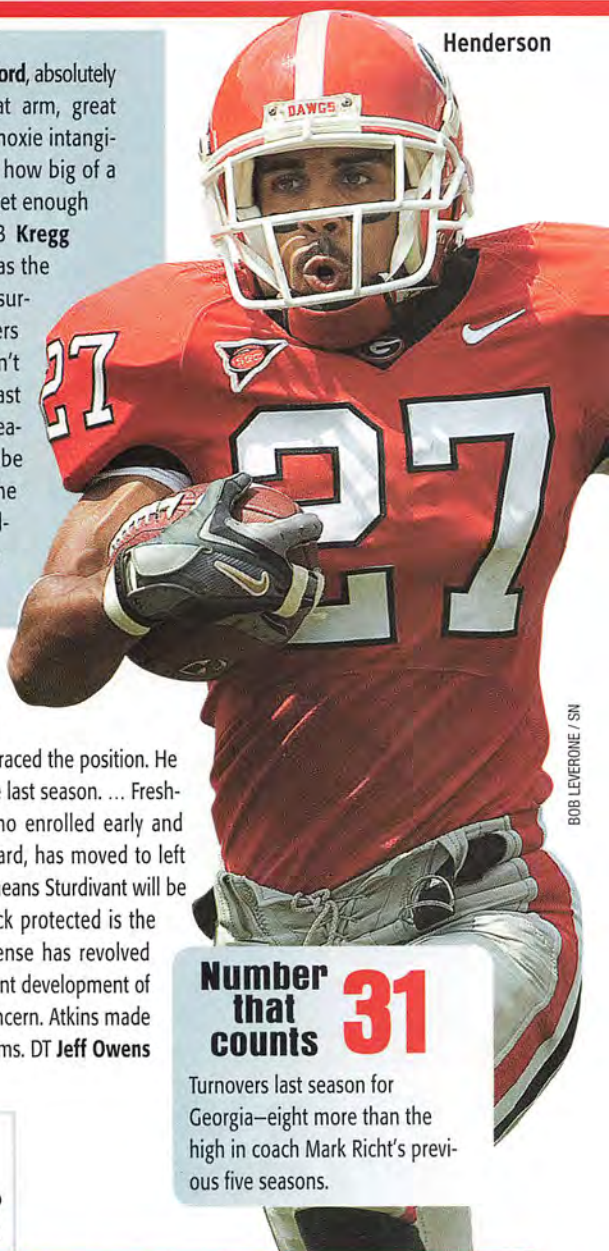
DEEP INSIDE

moved from cornerback before last season. ... Freshman **Trinton Sturdivant**, who enrolled early and was projected as a backup guard, has moved to left tackle and is atop the depth chart going into fall camp. That means Sturdivant will be protecting Stafford's blind side and keeping the quarterback protected is the No.1 priority going into this season. ... For years, the defense has revolved around space eating tackles on the interior, but the inconsistent development of talented sophomores **Kade Weston** and **Geno Atkins** is a concern. Atkins made strides in the spring, but Weston still is battling weight problems. DT **Jeff Owens** is solid in the middle, and leads the three-man rotation.

1 BIG THING

Open up the offense for Matthew Stafford. He has a full grasp of the playbook; give him the freedom to run everything in it.

Henderson



BOB LEVERONE / SN

Number that counts 31

Turnovers last season for Georgia—eight more than the high in coach Mark Richt's previous five seasons.

Can Roderick Battle and Marcus Howard hold up at defensive end?

>> Every coach I talk to says speed kills, and these guys have plenty of it. Sure, they may get engulfed at times by mammoth offensive tackles, but Battle and Howard will create enough disruption with their quick first step to compensate. Sorta like a guy named David Pollack, who excelled at Georgia despite lacking ideal dimensions. Don't underestimate the ability of coordinator Willie Martinez to devise schemes that keep Battle and Howard out of compromising matchups. —Tom Dienhart

BIG ?

>> Trust me, size really does matter. Battle and Howard simply don't measure up. Ends have been the key to Georgia's staunch defenses this decade—from Charles Grant to David Pollack to Quentin Moses. Battle and Howard don't fit that mold. They're undersized and can't be trusted as every down ends. Mostly, they'll be a steadying influence for talented freshmen Damarcus Dobbs and Michael Lemon and burly junior college transfer Jarius Wynn. —Matt Hayes

Can Andre' Woodson carry the 'Cats to a big-time bowl

>> Kentucky's big cat is just getting started. Woodson led the SEC in passing last season, and everyone in the stadium knew he was the one guy you had to stop to beat Kentucky. Now that Woodson has confidence to go with his immense talent, who's going to stop him? There hasn't been a quarterback like this in Lexington since Tim Couch, who led UK to a New Year's Bowl. Woodson is next. —Tom Dienhart



>> Eventually, SEC defenses figure it out. There are two concerns for Woodson after his fabulous junior season: The Wildcats won't be sneaking up on anyone, and teams will game-plan specifically to stop Woodson. Besides, the UK defense isn't very good. The Wildcats will have to beat one of the East's Big Three and South Carolina to get to a New Year's Day bowl, and that's not going to happen. —Matt Hayes

1 BIG THING With 18 returning starters and a dynamic offense, the Wildcats must build on last year's eight-win season.

ALBERT DICKSON / SN



Burton

DEEP INSIDE

Never mind that UK has some of the league's best skill players **QB Andre' Woodson**, **RB Rafael Little** and **WR Keenan Burton**—the offensive line has serious issues, primarily on the left side. Junior college transfer **T Josh Winchell** had problems staying healthy all spring, and **G Christian Johnson** has work to do academically to be cleared to play in the fall. Walk-ons **Marcus Davis** and **Mike Williams** figure to get significant playing time. ... The defensive front is a mess. There is hope talented freshman **DT Ricky Lumpkin**, who made impressive strides while redshirting last season, can win a starting spot. Starters **Myron Pryor** and **Corey Peters** are solid, but neither has the burst and pass rush ability of Lumpkin. ... **TE Jacob Tamme**, the league's most underrated player, has lost 10 pounds, shaved his 40 time to 4.5 and is free from nagging shoulder injuries. Look for him to double his 32 catches from last year.

Number that counts 26

The difference in turnover margin from 2005 (-9) to 2006 (+15). That's one big reason UK jumped from three wins in 2005 to eight in 2006.

SCOUT TAKES

If Kentucky could have played last season in the ACC, they could have won either one of those divisions. This is a really good team overshadowed by a lack of confidence in big games. ... **QB Andre Woodson**, **RB Rafael Little** and **WR Keenan Burton**—no one in the league has a better trio. No one. They'll score on anyone. This team just has to learn how to get stops on defense. ... **LB Wesley Woodyard** could start for any team in the SEC, but he needs some help from the defensive front. The defense is decent in coverage but can be controlled at the point of attack by bigger, more physical offensive lines. ... Woodson is good enough to play in the NFL, but his job has been made easier by a very good receiving corps. Keep your eyes on **WR Dicky Lyons**. He's always open. He's not a burner and he's not an athletic freak. He just knows how to get open.



SCOUT TAKES

You've got to root for a guy like QB **Matt Flynn**. He

could've played just about anywhere else and been on the field by now. He's smart, he's sneaky athletic, and he's a guy players rally around. He's why they'll be playing for the national title in January. ... WR **Early Doucet** is long and lean and has fantastic vision with the ball in the air. And you know what? Sophomore **Brandon LaFell** will be even better eventually. Those are two serious stars at the position. ... I know all about LSU's physical offensive line, and there's plenty of experience returning. But in four losses over the last two seasons, they were negated at the point of attack. They've got to play better in big games. ... How much do I like RB **Keiland Williams**? I'd take him in the first round right now.

Number that counts 4

Leading rushers from last season returning to LSU, including exciting bruiser **Keiland Williams**. Don't believe the pass-happy hype.

DEEP INSIDE

New offensive coordinator **Gary Crowton** likes to run the zone read play with the quarterback, but an injury to QB **Matt Flynn** would leave this team with serious issues. ... There are at least three potential starters at running back, but coach **Les Miles** likes a go-to back, and **Keiland Williams** has the frame to handle 25 carries a game. ... Former phenom WR **Early Doucet** mostly sat and waited for three seasons, but he was nearly unstoppable in spring practice. Doucet always had game-breaking speed, but he has learned how to get off the line of scrimmage and separate from coverage. ... There are concerns DE **Tyson Jackson** will see double-teams all season because the Tigers don't have a legitimate second end. **Tremaine Johnson** has been hit and miss but likely will get the first opportunity. Star freshman recruit **Sidell Corley** figures to get plenty of playing time.

Will new coordinator Gary Crowton jump-start the offense?

>> Crowton wasn't much of a head coach, but he's a heckuva teacher. Watch what he does with the predictable LSU offense—and how far it takes the Tigers.

Les Miles wants LSU to stay true to its philosophy: run the ball and play physically tough on both sides of the ball. But Crowton will inject his spread principles to give the Tigers more variety on offense. This team is loaded. There's no way it will go a third straight season with as much talent as any team in the country and not win some sort of championship. —Matt Hayes

>> I'm still trying to figure out how this marriage will work. If I understand correctly, Crowton is a disciple of spread offenses who likes to pass, pass and pass some more. On the other hand, head coach Les Miles is an old-school guy whose idea of offensive creativity is faking a hand off to the right and then handing off to the left. These guys are going to coexist? I can see the divorce coming, and all the talent in the world won't help if it's caught up in a custody dispute. —Tom Dienhart

1 BIG THING

Win games that matter. The Tigers have had the most talented team in the SEC the last two years, yet didn't win a conference championship.

Williams

BOB LEVERONE / SN

Which guy would you take at quarterback — Adams or Schaeffer?



MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES (2)

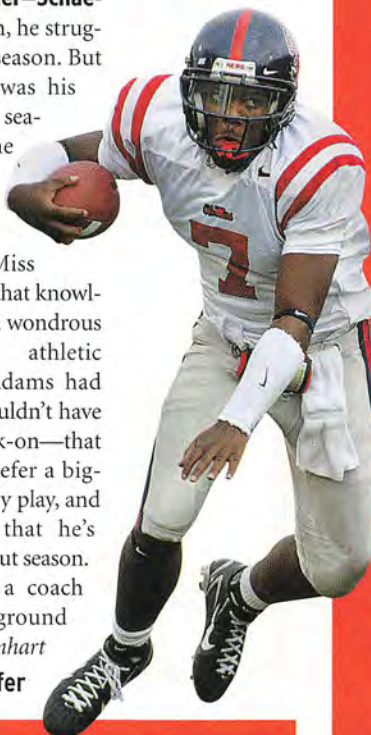
>> It's all about who fits best in what Ole Miss is trying to do, and that's Seth Adams. Hey, I was a Brent Schaeffer guy last season—led that parade with gusto. But Schaeffer is better suited for the spread option; Adams is suited to handing off to a powerful running game and making safe throws, and that's the Ole Miss philosophy. Schaeffer has the ability to score—or make confounding mistakes—any time he touches the ball. Adams' main asset is ball security. I'd go with the guy who doesn't give away the ball. —Matt Hayes

Adams



>> It's a no-brainer—Schaeffer is the guy. Yeah, he struggled at times last season. But remember: This was his third team in three seasons. Now that he has a year under his belt, Schaeffer better understands the Ole Miss offense. Combine that knowledge with a wondrous array of athletic gifts—if Adams had 'em, he wouldn't have been a walk-on—that make Schaeffer a big-play threat on every play, and it's easy to see that he's poised for a breakout season. That's just what a coach who's on shaky ground needs. —Tom Dienhart

Schaeffer



SCOUT TAKES

You can't ask QB **Brent Schaeffer** to run a drop-back, pro system. I realize there were other problems with Schaeffer, but forcing him to play in a system that doesn't let him out of the pocket is asking for trouble. ... You watch these guys practice, and it's obvious the talent level

has jumped over the last couple of seasons. This team can run. ... **Michael Oher** and **John Jerry** may be the two best offensive linemen in the league on potential and on what they've accomplished. It's scary how good they're going to be, both in college and the next level. ... With the strength of the offensive line, these guys have to line up and

stick it in **BenJarvus Green-Ellis'** belly 25-30 times and see what happens. He's a terrific athlete who runs with great lean. ... There is a lot of young speed on defense but not much size. It's perfect for (new coordinator) **John Thompson**. He likes to get all funky with sets and formations to confuse offenses. In reality, he's hiding his weakness.

No matter who plays quarterback—**Seth Adams** or **Brent Schaeffer**—this team will rely on TB **BenJarvus Green-Ellis**. The Rebels are good enough up front—T **Michael Oher** and G **John**

DEEP INSIDE

Jerry are two of the SEC's best—to grind away and win games in the fourth quarter. The staff thinks Green-Ellis can handle 25-30 carries a game. ... Coach **Ed Orgeron** says new coordinator **John Thompson** is in control of the defense, but Thompson won't be running the unorthodox schemes he's had success with in the past. The Rebels will use the Tampa 2 defense Orgeron worked with at USC. ... The Rebels have a serious question at the most important spot in the Tampa 2: middle linebacker, where dropping in coverage is as important as run defense. Heralded junior college transfer **Tony Fein**, who played in a passing league in California, likely will win the job.

Number that counts 23

The most points the Rebels scored in an SEC game—twice, both losses—during the past two seasons.

1 BIG THING

Bowl eligibility will buy coach Ed Orgeron—one of the game's best recruiters—more time in his building project.



Will another losing season get Sly Croom canned?

>> **Don't let this become a race issue; it's a won/lost issue.** And Croom's teams simply haven't won enough. Mississippi State isn't that far removed from playing for the SEC title (1998) and from being one of the league's more punishing teams. No matter what Croom has done to clean up the program's image, he's got to get results. If the Bulldogs can't get to a bowl game—at least a 6-6 record—Croom should be fired. —*Matt Hayes*

BIG ?

>> **Do the message board crazies know the depth of the mess Croom inherited?** I guess not. Croom deserves as much time as he needs. Why is it taking so long? Because he's doing it the right way. Jackie Sherrill didn't. Croom is getting closer. Just remember: Mississippi State isn't Florida, Alabama, Tennessee or Georgia. This is a second-tier school where the effects of probation and lack of talent are magnified and take longer to overcome. —*Tom Dienhart*

1 BIG THING

If Michael Henig can stand and throw—instead of scrambling to buy time—he can take pressure off of the Bulldogs' talented but overworked defense.

For all the talk of **Sylvester Croom's** West Coast offense roots, the defense will carry this team. The staff is excited about DT **Jesse Bowman**, a junior college transfer who blossomed in the spring and could take pressure off DE **Titus Brown**. Bowman has the size to collapse the pocket and allow Brown, a quick, rangy player off the edge, to freelance. ...

DEEP INSIDE

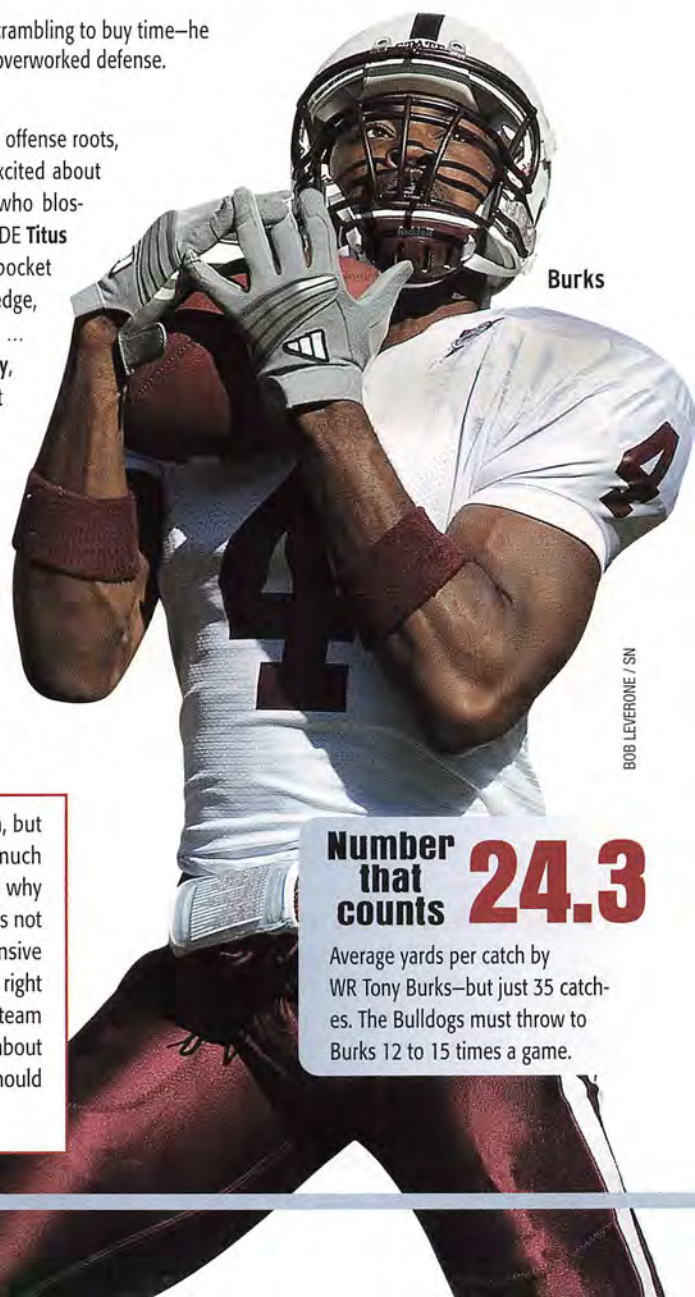
Jamar Chaney, who started at

weakside linebacker, has moved to the middle and added speed to the spot. But in an effort to gain speed, the unit has given up size—a bad sign considering four teams in the West are ball-control, run-oriented offenses. ... QB **Michael Henig's** health is vital. He knows the system better and he's considerably more accurate than his backups. The staff has instituted this rule: Henig won't get hit in practice until the season opener against LSU. Also, Henig says he'll slide more when he scrambles.

SCOUT TAKES

longer he can win three or four games and still have a job. ... It's pretty easy to see why this team has struggled: zero ability at quarterback. **Michael Henig** is decent, but he's not going to win games. ... This team is tough, and that's a reflection of Sly. The defensive front is deep and athletic—probably the best front four in the league. **Titus Brown** is right there with Derrick Harvey at Florida as the most complete end in the SEC. ... If this team had a better than average quarterback, WR **Tony Burks** would be on the top of just about every All-American list in the country. He won't even be preseason All-SEC—but he should be. In three years, he'll be tearing it up in the NFL.

Sly Croom is a good man and a better coach, but he's in a tough situation. I don't know how much



Burks

BOB LEVERONE / SN

Number that counts **24.3**

Average yards per catch by WR Tony Burks—but just 35 catches. The Bulldogs must throw to Burks 12 to 15 times a game.

Brinkley



SCOUT TAKES

LB **Jasper Brinkley** is my favorite defensive player in the SEC. Wow, can that kid bring it. He has so little help on that unit, it easy to miss what he does. Watch how easily he moves laterally and pursues the ball. ... This team hasn't been that good on the interior on either side of the ball. OT **Jamon Meredith** is a solid, but the defensive front isn't really that good. They don't get pressure off the edge, and they can't consistently stop the run between the tackles. ... CB **Captain Munnerlyn** will be one of the league's best cover corners by the end of the season.

He's still learning, but he has good instincts and likes to take chances. ... RB **Cory Boyd** made a smart move by staying in school. He will play his way into the first round of the draft this season.

1 BIG THING

Close out games. The Gamecocks have lost five games in the fourth quarter the last two seasons.

DEEP INSIDE

Can defensive ends Eric Norwood and Travian Robertson toughen up a soft unit?

>> Didn't you read their press clippings? These guys are the bomb. They have power, they have speed and—most important—they have talent. The days of soft and squishy vs. the run are over. These demons will seal the edge and pinch plays inside, where a megatalented set of linebackers will clean up. This duo also can pin back its ears and go get the quarterback. It's going to be fun. —*Tom Dienhart*

>> A change of players won't do it—how about a change of culture? This team needs more than just a strong pass rush. The Gamecocks don't do anything well but a lot of things decent—and that's not enough for them to win a championship. Norwood and Robertson will help, but this team must learn to stop the run consistently so teams can't keep the key to USC's success—the offense—off the field. —*Matt Hayes*

**Number
that
counts** 3

The most seasons Steve Spurrier has coached at a school (Duke, Florida) without winning a conference championship. This is Year 3 in Columbia.

Steve Spurrier believes the win at Clemson last season will help turn the corner on the culture of losing in Columbia. More important: He says from here on, the goal is to win the SEC. In other words, he believes he has the players to pull it off. ... DE **Eric Norwood** is primed for a huge season. He was nearly unblockable this spring—yeah, we know, the offensive line is shaky—and has shown a quick burst off the edge. The Gamecocks are desperate for some semblance of a pass rush from the front four. ... The defense will see the biggest impact from South Carolina's heralded recruiting class. DT **Ladi Aji-boye** and DE **Travian Robertson**—they both enrolled early—could win starting jobs. DT **Jonathan Williams** also will be part of the rotation. DE **Clifton Geathers** was moved to the offensive line to try to help out the team's weakest unit.



SOUTH CAROLINA

DEEP INSIDE



BOB LEVERONE / SN

QB **Erik Ainge** is expected to be full go for fall camp, but there usually are lingering affects—physical and mental—with a knee injury. Ainge likely will be limited early. One positive: Backup **Jonathan Crompton**, who played well in spots when Ainge was injured last season, got extended spring work with the first team offense. ... Tennessee had just 17 sacks last season, an embarrassing number for aggressive defensive coordinator John Chavis. There is hope one-time rising star **J.T. Mapu** can be a dominant force on the interior. He was rusty last year after spending two years away from the game on a Mormon mission. ... One of three potential star tailbacks must embrace the starter's role. **LaMarcus Coker** is the team's most dynamic but is too hit and miss.

Montario Hardesty and **Arian Foster** do a lot of good things but no great things. The Vols need Coker to re-energize the running game.

Hefney

SCOUT TAKES

DE **Xavier Mitchell** has the ability to dominate a game, but he gets lost for plays at a time. He's a little undersized but has terrific athletic ability. ... It's good to see Tennessee finding the tight end again. **Chris Brown** and **Brad Cottam** are solid players who can make up for the inexperienced receivers. ... Tennessee's linebackers have underachieved the last couple of seasons, and that position has been the foundation of the defense for years. **Jerod Mayo** can be a very good player if he stays healthy. **Rico McCoy** is another guy who has a chance to be good, but everyone else is serviceable; nothing special. ... **Jonathan Hefney** really became a more confident player when he was moved to safety. He's just not a cover guy, and he's a nice stabilizing force in the middle of a secondary that struggles in man coverage. ... Defensive coordinator **John Chavis** is a very underrated coach who always has his unit ready to play.

Number that counts **29**

Career catches—total—for likely starting receivers Lucas Taylor, Austin Rogers and Josh Briscoe.

Is it SEC title game or bust for Phil Fulmer?

>> **Is that a sense of urgency I smell in the air? Sure is.** Look, facts are facts, and this is a sobering one: Tennessee hasn't won the SEC since 1998. That's not good when you consider this is one of the most well-endowed programs in the nation. That ought to buy more than some bowl game played before January. Add in the fact Florida is coming off a national title, Georgia is cruising under Mark Richt and South Carolina is looming under Steve Spurrier, and only one conclusion can be drawn: Fulmer has to win big this season—or else. —*Tom Dienhart*

BIG ?

>> **Look, we're not all Alabama with unlimited funds.** This isn't about the Vols slipping in the SEC. Tennessee won't fire Fulmer because it doesn't have the cash. The administration just extended Fulmer's contract through 2013, and if he doesn't do something stupid—NCAA violations, embarrass the university off the field—he's not

going anywhere. To fire Fulmer, UT would have to eat six years of contract at \$2.05 million per season. I'm no math whiz, but that's a lot of cookies. UT still is paying off basketball coach Buzz Peterson. Paying off another failed coach is no way to run an athletic department. —*Matt Hayes*

1 BIG THING

Pound the rock. The Vols' offense begins and ends with a power running game—and they can't forget that.

Are three sophomore corners good enough to save a weak secondary?

>> Look, these guys will be fine if the big fellas up front do their job. There may be some salty linebackers on campus—including Jonathan Goff—but the Commodores never have enough horses along the line to mute opponents' rushing games or to get pressure on quarterbacks. Until that changes, it won't matter two flips how well the Vandy cornerbacks cover. Hey, no one can cover all day. —Tom Dienhart

BIG

>> You can't hide poor cover corners.

Joel Caldwell and D.J. Moore relied too much on safety Reshard Langford, who forced game plans to the perimeter because of his ability to disrupt routes. But Caldwell and Moore still allowed opponents to dink and dunk all over the perimeter. Unless Vandy greatly improves in rushing the passer, Caldwell, Moore and

Myron Lewis, who played corner and safety in the spring, will struggle because they're not elite corners—at least not yet. —Matt Hayes

SCOUT TAKES

LB **Jonathan Goff** is easily one of my favorite players in all of college football. A tough guy with a mean streak; a guy who wants to hit people. He's better than Jamie Duncan and Shelton Quarles—two guys from Vandy who had nice NFL careers. ... This team is very close to a bowl game. OT **Brian Stamper**'s return from back surgery could be what puts them over the top. He's a solid player, but he's also the emotional juice. ... If WR **Earl Bennett** had been eligible to leave for the NFL after last season, he would've been a first-round pick. You cannot play him with man coverage; he'll beat it every time. But will QB **Chris Nickson** find him? He's just too erratic; he needs to slow down. ... The two safeties—**Reshard Langford** and **Ryan Hamilton**—are like linebackers. That's good considering that limited talent on the front four puts way too much pressure on the back seven.

**Number
that
counts
19**

Returning starters, who could help Vandy turn the corner. The Commodores lost four SEC games by a combined 18 points last season.

DEEP INSIDE

QB **Chris Nickson** accounted for more than 2,700 yards and 24 touchdowns last season, yet didn't really hit his stride until late in the year. The reason: He missed much of the previous spring with a hamstring injury. Fast forward to this spring: no one on the team had a better 15-practice run. Vandy will qualify for a bowl this fall, and Nickson's play will be the reason. ... Vandy hasn't had a legit rush end—one that teams must game plan for—in years. Converted linebacker **Quavian Lewis** had a huge spring, but there are some concerns. He's undersized (225 pounds) and won't be much of a factor in run defense. But he has too much athleticism and burst to take him off the field and use him as a situational pass rusher.

Nickson

1 BIG THING

Don't stumble at home in nonconference play. If Vandy wins out at home against Eastern Michigan, Miami (Ohio), Wake Forest and I-AA Richmond, any two wins in the conference means a bowl game for the first time in three decades.



ALBERT DICKSON / SN

The last words ...

What's up in the SEC? Get down with all the inside stuff.

ALABAMA Wallace Gilberry and Bobby Greenwood are two of the league's best defensive linemen, but beyond them, it's shaky inside. This year's recruiting class includes eight defensive linemen, and beefy DTs Alfred McCullough and Kerry Murphy need to contribute immediately.

ARKANSAS This is the last chance for WR Robert Johnson, once a heralded quarterback recruit. If he can develop into a legitimate second option—he showed progress in the spring—it will reduce double-teams on star WR Marcus Monk.

AUBURN The Tigers are so deep at tailback that Mario Fannin, who may be the most talented of the bunch, is a third-stringer. Brad Lester will play the most early because he's the best in pass protection, but Ben Tate and Fannin are runners with dynamic ability.

FLORIDA The Gators still don't have a go-to running back. Kestahn Moore was having a solid spring before it ended with a sports hernia, and Mon Williams—the team's only back with good size—is out for this season with a knee injury.

GEORGIA Tripp Chandler could be the next in a long line of successful tight ends under coach Mark Richt. Chandler's struggles with run blocking last season kept him off the field, but he has become more consistent.

KENTUCKY LB Wesley Woodyard, one of the SEC's best, is surrounded by experience. LBs Micah Johnson and Sam Maxwell have as much talent as Woodyard, but the instincts and nuances of the position just aren't there.

LSU Coach Les Miles says new offensive coordinator Gary Crowton has complete control of the offense, but the scheme used in spring drills was nowhere near the pass-happy system Crowton used the last two seasons at Oregon.

MISSISSIPPI Using more short and timing routes will put a premium on the run after the catch. At 6-6, junior college transfer WR A.J. Jackson has the frame and body control to beat defenses with fades and slants—key to the short passing game.

MISSISSIPPI STATE WR Tony Burks, who led the SEC with 24.3 yards per catch, focused on shorter routes in spring drills. Against zone coverage, motion and twists with other receivers figure to get Burks free to use his speed after the catch on short routes.

SOUTH CAROLINA TB Cory Boyd, who has shown star potential for three seasons, will be the feature back and could get 20 carries a game. Mike Davis will still be used, but mostly in situational sets.

VANDERBILT If DJ. Moore and Joel Caldwell—both freshman starters at cornerback last season—and Myron Lewis can play more man coverage, safeties Reshard Langford and Ryan Hamilton can freelance more in blitz and coverage packages.

TENNESSEE There's a growing rift between coach Phil Fulmer and athletic director Mike Hamilton. Hamilton announced Fulmer's contract extension—no raise for the second straight year—on a radio show in the spring before the deal was final.

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Projected finish

1	M
2	W
3	W
4	OHIO STATE
5	W
6	PURDUE
7	M
8	ILLINOIS
9	S
10	W
11	W

ASCENDING ^

Illinois. Ron Zook warned it would take time to build a talent base. Well, the cupboard looks stocked as the coach enters his third year in a program that also is buoyed by facility improvements. All signs point toward Zook's feverish recruiting paying off, perhaps with the Illini securing a bowl bid for the first time since 2001.

BIG TEN

Old-school league runs back to the future

Please excuse all the dust. The ultimate old-school conference is going, well, old school with most teams leaning on talented running backs while such perennial contenders as Ohio State, Wisconsin and Iowa break in new quarterbacks.

Somewhere, Woody Hayes is smiling. Bo Schembechler, too. This, after all, is the league that gave us Archie Griffin, Ron Dayne, Eddie George and Anthony Thompson, not to mention such unforgettable old-timers as Howard "Hopalong" Cassady, Alan "The Horse" Ameche, Tom Harmon, Les Horvath and Red Grange.

Seven of the Big Ten's top 10 rushers return this fall. Wisconsin plowhorse P.J. Hill leads the parade of veteran running backs after a fabulous freshman season in which he led the conference in rushing with 1,569 yards.

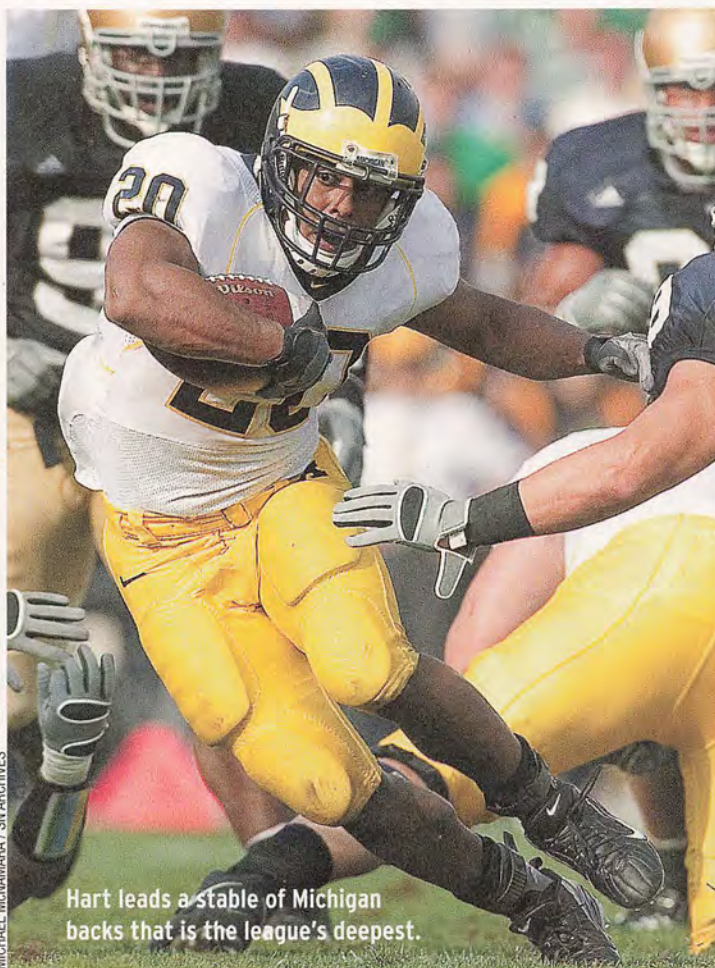
Other notable returnees are Ohio State's Chris Wells, Minnesota's Amir Pinnix, Northwestern's Tyrell Sutton, Purdue's Kory Sheets, Michigan State's Javon Ringer and Iowa's Albert Young.

Wells is the most intriguing of that group. He has impressive power and speed and could be poised for a huge season.

But no team can match Michigan's running depth, which includes Mike Hart, Brandon Minor and Kevin Grady. Hart could emerge as a Heisman Trophy contender.

Michigan also returns quarterback Chad Henne, three starting linemen and promising receiver Mario Manningham to one of the nation's top offenses.

Not surprisingly, the Wolverines are the favorite to win the Big Ten.



Hart leads a stable of Michigan backs that is the league's deepest.

MICHAEL McMANARA / SN ARCHIVES

DESCENDING v

Iowa. After forging a 31-7 record (20-4 in the Big Ten) and two Big Ten titles from 2002-04, Iowa is slumping. The past two years, the Hawkeyes went 13-12 (7-9 in the Big Ten) and are coming off their first losing season since 2000. Coach Kirk Ferentz isn't being paid more than \$2 million to produce mid-level bowl trips.



MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES

Coming back from injuries

Anderson Russell, FS, Ohio State. He was headed for a breakout season before hurting a knee early last year. Anderson has closing speed and a nose for the ball.

Ken Iwebema, DE, Iowa. A bum shoulder scuttled most of his second half last season. The Hawkeyes need his speed and power off the edge to generate a pass rush.

Javon Ringer, RB, Michigan State. His 2006 season ended in October with a knee injury. With the Spartans recommitting to the ground game under coach Mark Dantonio, they need Ringer's speed and elusiveness to make things go.

Austin Scott, RB, Penn State. After a knee injury forced him to redshirt, Scott will try to pick up where he left off in the 2006 Orange Bowl, when he ran for 110 yards.

Time to get it done

Jake Christensen, QB, Iowa. He's a coach's kid who has moxie, savvy and a dash of swagger. He'll need everything he can muster as he battles to take over for three-year starter Drew Tate. Christensen has shown touch and a willingness to make plays with his arm instead of his feet.

Todd Boeckman, QB, Ohio State. He lacks the athletic skills of his predecessor, Troy Smith, but he has a big arm, knows the system and is a coach's son. Boeckman still will have to battle Rob Schoenhof, who is cut from a similar mold.

Brian Hoyer, QB, Michigan State. He has a better arm than Drew Stanton and good leadership skills, but Hoyer must adjust to a new scheme and relearn how to operate from under center after working mostly in shotgun sets.

Chris Wells, RB, Ohio State. With Antonio Pittman's early departure to the NFL, Wells must build on the promise he flashed as a true freshman. "Beanie" is a big back with speed, a combination the Buckeyes have lacked since Eddie George.



CLIFF JEFFE / THE GAZETTE

Newcomers to watch

Arrelious Benn, WR, Illinois. The true freshman arrived on campus in time for spring drills amid much fanfare. Why? Because he may be the biggest recruit—and certainly one of the most heralded—in school history. A big and fast target, Benn is the key to Illinois developing a much-

needed vertical passing game.

Harold Howell, WR, Minnesota. He's a little guy (5-8, 160) who figures to be an instant hit as a return man. And coaches are hoping he also can juice up a new spread offense that will be desperate for playmakers.

All-conference

FIRST TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Mario Manningham, Michigan (6-0, 186, Jr.)
WR	Dorien Bryant, Purdue (5-10, 175, Sr.)
TE	Travis Beckum, Wisconsin (6-4, 221, Jr.)
T	Jake Long, Michigan (6-7, 313, Sr.)
T	Kirk Barton, Ohio State (6-6, 310, Sr.)
G	Adam Kraus, Michigan (6-6, 296, Sr.)
G	Jordan Grimes, Purdue (6-3, 325, Sr.)
C	Marcus Coleman, Wisconsin (6-6, 302, Sr.)
QB	Chad Henne, Michigan (6-2, 224, Sr.)
RB	Mike Hart, Michigan (5-9, 196, Sr.)
RB	P.J. Hill, Wisconsin (5-11, 222, So.)

Defense

E	Matt Shaughnessy, Wisconsin (6-6, 242, Jr.)
E	Vernon Gholston, Ohio State (6-4, 260, Jr.)
T	Terrance Taylor, Michigan (6-0, 310, Jr.)
T	Jason Chapman, Wisconsin (6-4, 289, Jr.)
LB	James Laurinaitis, Ohio State (6-3, 244, Jr.)
LB	Dan Connor, Penn State (6-3, 233, Sr.)
LB	Shawn Crable, Michigan (6-5, 245, Sr.)
CB	Jack Ikegwuonu, Wisconsin (6-1, 201, Jr.)
CB	Malcolm Jenkins, Ohio State (6-1, 202, Jr.)
S	Anthony Scirrotto, Penn State (6-0, 195, Jr.)
S	Jamar Adams, Michigan (6-2, 212, Sr.)

Specialists

K	Taylor Mehlhaff, Wisconsin (5-11, 185, Sr.)
P	A.J. Trapasso, Ohio State (6-1, 220, So.)
KR	Marcus Thigpen, Indiana (5-9, 190, Jr.)
SN All-American	

Players of the year

Offense:	Mike Hart, RB, Michigan
Defense:	Jack Ikegwuonu, CB, Wisconsin

SECOND TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	James Hardy, Indiana (6-7, 220, Jr.)
WR	Deon Butler, Penn State (5-10, 168, Jr.)
TE	Dustin Keller, Purdue (6-4, 240, Sr.)
T	Eric Vanden Heuvel, Wisconsin (6-7, 324, Jr.)
T	Alex Boone, Ohio State (6-8, 325, Jr.)
G	Kraig Urbik, Wisconsin (6-6, 330, Jr.)
G	Steve Rehling, Ohio State (6-8, 329, Jr.)
C	Rafael Eubanks, Iowa (6-3, 288, So.)
QB	Curtis Painter, Purdue (6-4, 223, Jr.)
RB	Chris Wells, Ohio State (6-1, 230, So.)
RB	Albert Young, Iowa (5-10, 209, Sr.)

Defense

E	Ken Iwebema, Iowa (6-4, 270, Sr.)
E	Willie VanDeSteege, Minnesota (6-4, 255, Jr.)
T	Mitch King, Iowa (6-3, 264, Jr.)
T	Chris Norwell, Illinois (6-6, 290, Sr.)
LB	J. Leman, Illinois (6-2, 240, Sr.)
LB	Mike Klinkenborg, Iowa (6-2, 240, Sr.)
LB	Sean Lee, Penn State (6-2, 232, Jr.)
CB	Justin King, Penn State (6-0, 186, Jr.)
CB	Vontae Davis, Illinois (6-0, 185, So.)
S	Otis Wiley, Michigan State (6-2, 210, Jr.)
S	Dominique Barber, Minnesota (6-0, 210, Sr.)

Specialists

K	Brett Swenson, Michigan State (5-8, 160, So.)
P	Ken DeBauche, Wisconsin (6-2, 220, Sr.)
KR	Derrick Williams, Penn State (6-0, 203, Jr.)

Newcomers of the year

Offense:	Arrelious Benn, WR, Illinois
Defense:	Austin Panter, LB, Michigan

Christensen

Austin Panter, LB, Michigan. The Wolverines are so desperate for linebacker help that they reached into the junior college ranks for Panter. It will be vital that he lives up to this All-American billing if this team wants to field a championship-caliber defense.

Nerraw McCormack, OT, Penn State. Joe Paterno tapped the junior college ranks for the first time since 1986, grabbing McCormack and fellow lineman Ako Poti. Paterno hopes they can be an immediate answer for a unit that has been sub-par for too long.



MICHAEL McNAMARA / SN ARCHIVES

Gotta-see games

> Oregon at Michigan, Sept. 8

The Wolverines haven't forgotten 2003 when, ranked No. 3, they got dumped, 31-27, in Eugene. Oregon has played in Ann Arbor three times (the last in 1973) and never scored a point.

> Notre Dame at Michigan, Sept. 15

The Wolverines surprised everyone by trouncing the Irish last year. This year, Michigan will be expected to trounce Notre Dame. Be careful, Big Blue. This one is scary.

> Iowa at Wisconsin, Sept. 22

This is the Big Ten opener for each program. Iowa is trying to right its ship after suffering its first losing season since 2000. The Badgers harbor Big Ten title dreams.

> Ohio State at Penn State, Oct. 27

Will the tide turn for the Nittany Lions, who are 5-9 vs. Ohio State since joining the Big Ten? This could be the year because the Buckeyes still might be sorting out their retooled offense.

> Wisconsin at Ohio State, Nov. 3

How will the Buckeyes' offense look at this point? If it's still sputtering, the Badgers will have a great chance to win their fourth straight game in Columbus in the schools' first meeting since 2004.

> Michigan at Wisconsin, Nov. 10

For all the Badgers accomplished during the Barry Alvarez era, they still were manhandled by the Wolverines (3-8). Bret Bielema will be looking for a defining career win in what could be the de facto Big Ten championship game.

> Ohio State at Michigan, Nov. 17

The Wolverines have not beaten the Buckeyes since 2003. If you're scoring at home (and we know you are in Ann Arbor), Lloyd Carr is 1-5 vs. Jim Tressel.

> Dream schedule Iowa. The Big Ten schedule makers doubly blessed the Hawkeyes by moving Ohio State and Michigan off the menu. The toughest non-conference game is ... at Iowa State? Add it up, and the 2006 winning percentage of Iowa's opponents is .483. Yeah, it's time to get fat, happy and back to a big-time bowl in Iowa City.

> Nightmare schedule Michigan State. Welcome to East Lansing, Mark Dantonio. The Big Ten schedule rotates Illinois and Minnesota off and Iowa and Wisconsin on. And both are on the road. Plus,

Guys who change game plans

Vernon Gholston, DE, Ohio State. He's the quintessential disruptive force off the edge, a combination of freakish strength and first-step quickness that keeps offensive linemen awake at night. Gholston, a former linebacker, even drops into coverage on occasion. Yeah, he's scary.

Jack Ikegwuonu, CB, Wisconsin. He's big, fast and really good. Badgers defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz knows he can trust "Ike" to lock down one-third of the field, which frees a safety to overload another area. Nice.

Kellen Lewis, QB, Indiana. This guy was a revelation last season. He became a one-man wrecking crew for an otherwise outmanned Hoosiers team. The staff gives Lewis free rein to run, but it's his surprising passing skills and underrated decision-making that make him so successful. And he'll only get better.

Mario Manningham, WR, Michigan. If healthy (he missed three games last year), Manningham is a big play waiting to happen for an offense that had grown stale and predictable. Manningham could carve out a place next to Anthony Carter, Amani Toomer, David Terrell and Desmond Howard in Big Blue wideout lore.

Guys who make game plans

ON THE HOT SEAT: Joe Tiller, Purdue. Despite producing nine bowl bids in 10 years, Tiller fights perceptions that his program has gone stale. Still, he has earned the right to decide when he'll leave. An inability to pay his staff top dollar has hurt Tiller, who isn't bosom buddies with athletic director Morgan Burke.

BEST COACH: Jim Tressel, Ohio State. To whom much is given, much is expected. And Tressel has delivered amid whacko expectations: a 5-1 record vs. Michigan, two BCS title game appearances and one BCS crown. How does Governor Tressel sound?

BEST OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Chryst, Wisconsin. How good is this guy?

When he considered taking a job with the Dallas Cowboys, Wisconsin responded by giving him the sweetest deal of any coordinator in the Big Ten. Chryst has updated the ground-pounding Badgers attack by introducing multiple formations.

BEST DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tom Bradley, Penn State. Entering his 29th season at State College, Bradley

did some of his best work last year when the Nittany Lions yielded just 12 touchdowns (one in overtime) in their final 11 games. He has a knack for devising schemes to exploit weak spots in offenses.

RISEING STAR: Mike Locksley, Illinois offensive coordinator. The guy is a recruiting machine who has had head coaching offers. If his X's and O's make the Illini attack fly, Locksley will be a hot commodity for BCS schools.

BEST STAFF: Michigan. Credit Lloyd Carr for giving his team a better chance by altering his staff before last season. New offensive coordinator Mike DeBord found ways to maximize his talent and forge a deadly attack with balance. New defensive coordinator Ron English became a hot commodity after molding his players into an attacking unit that was unpredictable.

Tressel



JAY DROWNS / SN

there are dates at Notre Dame and Ohio State, and visits from Michigan and Penn State. This is no way to rehab a program.

> Bowl bound Michigan looks like the league's BCS entry. Figure Wisconsin and Ohio State to play in Florida (Capital One and Outback bowls) and Penn State and Iowa to battle for the Champs Sports and Alamo bowls. Purdue has a good shot at the Insight, and Minnesota could grab the Motor City spot. If the Big Ten gets two BCS teams, everyone would move up, creating an opening for Illinois or Indiana—if either is bowl eligible.

> Who they don't play

Illinois: Michigan State, Purdue

Indiana: Michigan, Ohio State

Iowa: Michigan, Ohio State

Michigan: Indiana, Iowa

Michigan State: Illinois, Minnesota

Minnesota: Michigan State, Penn State

Northwestern: Penn State, Wisconsin

Ohio State: Indiana, Iowa

Penn State: Minnesota, Northwestern

Purdue: Illinois, Wisconsin

Wisconsin: Northwestern, Purdue

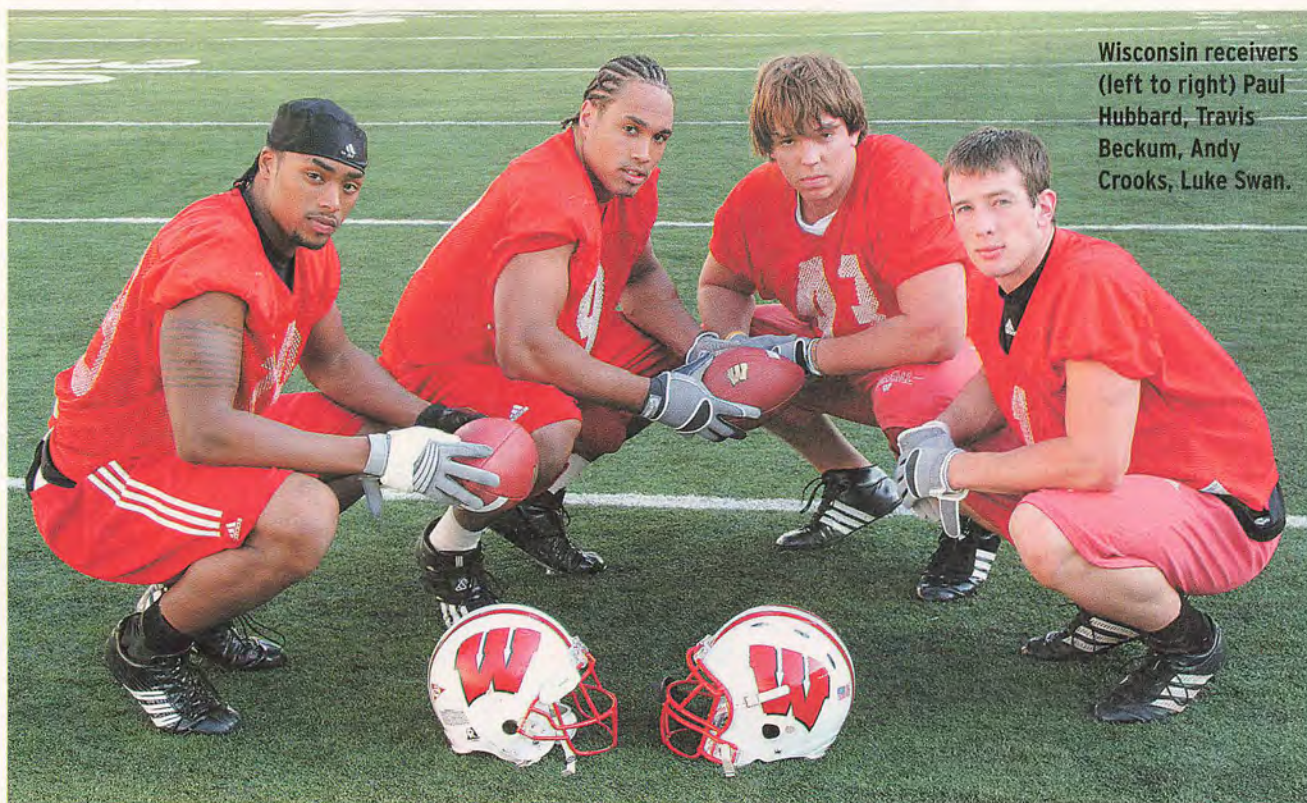
UNIT
rankings

	Backfield	Receivers	Offensive line	Overall	Defensive line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
Illinois	11	10	7	11	9	5	7	6	9	9
Indiana	4	4	11	7	11	11	8	11	5	8
Iowa	9	8	5	8	2	4	5	4	6	2
Michigan	1	6	1	1	4	6	4	5	4	3
Michigan State	7	9	10	10	10	9	11	10	10	7
Minnesota	10	11	4	9	5	8	10	8	11	10
Northwestern	6	5	8	6	6	10	9	9	8	11
Ohio State	8	7	3	5	3	2	3	2	2	1
Penn State	5	1	9	4	7	1	1	3	3	4
Purdue	2	2	6	3	8	7	6	7	7	5
Wisconsin	3	3	2	2	1	3	2	1	1	6

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

Returning leaders

RUSHING Player, school, class	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.		
1. P.J. Hill, Wisconsin, So.	13	311	1,569	5.0	60	15	120.7	6		
2. Mike Hart, Michigan, Sr.	13	318	1,562	4.9	54	14	120.2	7		
3. Amir Pinnix, Minnesota, Sr.	13	252	1,272	5.0	40	10	97.8	16		
4. Tyrell Sutton, Northwestern, Jr.	12	189	1,000	5.3	64	5	83.3	37		
5. Kory Sheets, Purdue, Jr.	14	158	780	4.9	30	11	55.7	73		
PASSING Player, school, class	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1. Curtis Painter, Purdue, Jr.	14	315	530	59.4	19	3,985	12.7	22	129.1	4
2. Chad Henne, Michigan, Sr.	13	203	328	61.9	8	2,508	12.4	22	143.4	40
3. Anthony Morelli, Penn State, Sr.	13	208	386	53.9	8	2,424	11.7	11	111.9	43
4. Kellen Lewis, Indiana, So.	11	190	346	54.9	7	2,221	11.7	14	118.1	52
5. Juice Williams, Illinois, So.	12	103	259	39.8	9	1,489	14.5	9	92.6	88
RECEIVING Player, school, class	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.	
1. Dorian Bryant, Purdue, Sr.	14	87	1,068	53	6	6.2	12.3	76.3	8	
2. Travis Beckum, Wisconsin, Jr.	13	61	903	62	5	4.7	14.8	69.5	140	
3. Greg Orton, Purdue, Jr.	14	58	790	43	5	4.1	13.6	56.4	151	
4. Dustin Keller, Purdue, Sr.	14	56	771	69	4	4.0	13.8	55.1	163	
5. James Hardy, Indiana, Jr.	10	51	722	48	10	5.1	14.2	72.2	186	

Wisconsin receivers
(left to right) Paul
Hubbard, Travis
Beckum, Andy
Crooks, Luke Swan.

WISCONSIN

Recruiting buzz Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact	Diamond in the rough
1. Michigan	QB Ryan Mallett, 6-6/235	DB Donovan Warren, 6-0/175	LB Austin Panter, 6-3/240
2. Ohio State	DE Eugene Clifford, 6-2/190	RB Brandon Saine, 6-0/200	WR Dane Sazzenbacher, 5-11/174
3. Illinois	DE Martez Wilson, 6-4/230	WR Arrelious Benn, 6-1/210	RB Daniel Dufrene, 5-11/205
4. Penn State	DE Devon Still, 6-6/251	LB Chaz Powell, 6-1/184	DT Chimaeze Okoli, 6-5/275
5. Iowa	OL Bryan Bulaga, 6-5/270	DB Jordan Bernstine, 5-10/200	QB Marvin McNutt, 6-3/180
6. Wisconsin	OL Josh Oglesby, 6-7/315	RB John Clay, 6-0/222	DT Jasper Grimes, 6-2/280
7. Michigan State	DT Antonio Jeremiah, 6-4/280	WR Mark Dell, 6-1/177	DT Ryan Wheat, 6-4/298
8. Northwestern	DE Vincent Browne, 6-5/239	DB Jordan Mabin, 5-10/178	RB Scott Concannon, 5-10/185
9. Minnesota	DE Anthony Jacobs, 6-2/235	QB Clint Brewster, 6-1/187	RB Duane Bennett, 5-9/191
10. Purdue	LB Brian Ellis, 6-3/240	DE Ryan Kerrigan, 6-4/233	ATH Nick Mondek, 6-6/224
11. Indiana	TE Max Dedmond, 6-5/235	DT Jeff Boyd, 6-2/280	QB Mitchell Evans, 6-3/190

Rankings by Rivals.com

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
Ohio State	12-1*	10-2*	8-4	11-2	14-0*	55-9
Michigan	11-2	7-5	9-3*	10-3*	10-3	47-16
Wisconsin	12-1	10-3	9-3	7-6	8-6	46-19
Iowa	6-7	7-5	10-2*	10-3	11-2*	44-19
Minnesota	6-7	7-5	7-5	10-3	8-5	38-25
Penn State	9-4	11-1*	4-7	3-9	9-4	36-25
Purdue	8-6	5-6	7-5	9-4	7-6	36-27
Michigan State	4-8	5-6	5-7	8-5	4-8	26-34
Northwestern	4-8	7-5	6-6	6-7	3-9	26-35
Indiana	5-7	4-7	3-8	2-10	3-9	17-41
Illinois	2-10	2-9	3-8	1-11	5-7	13-45

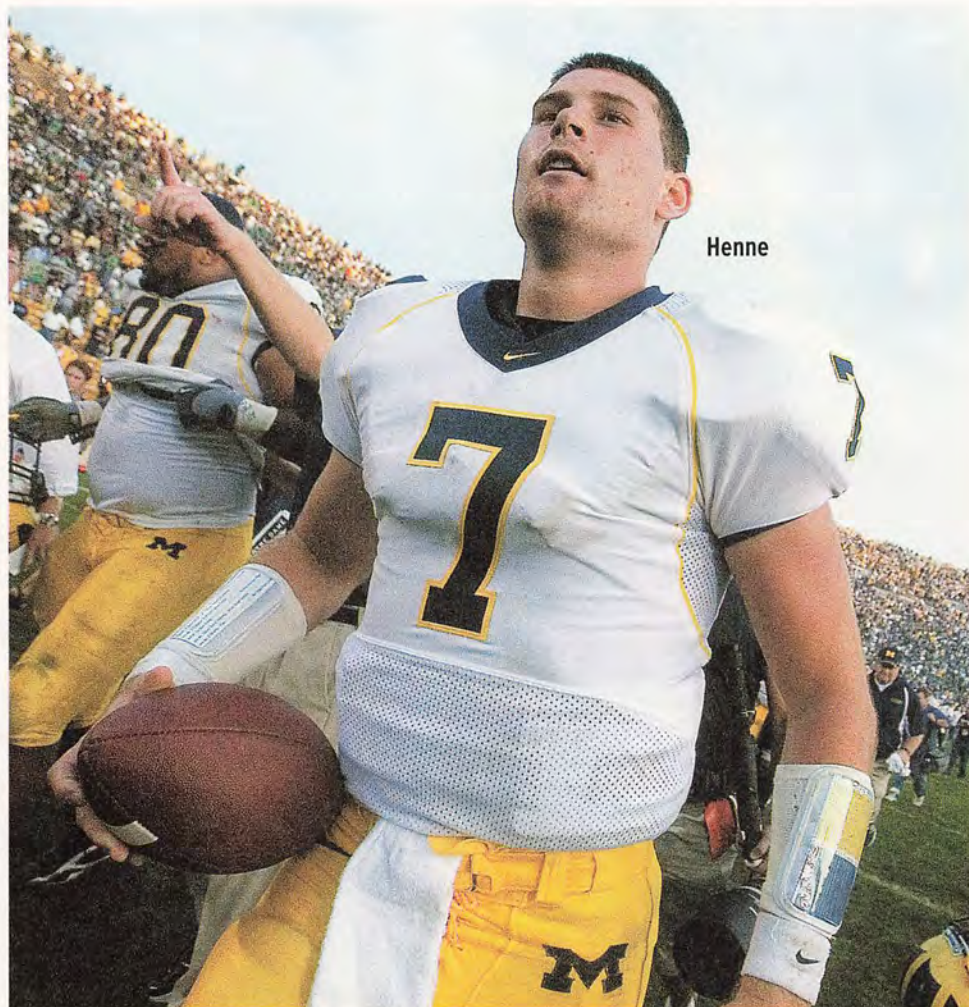
*Conference champ ^National champ

WOLVERINES

National championship or bust. It's that way every year in Ann Arbor. Some years, it's a crazy notion. But not this fall. The offense will have few peers, and the schedule is a coach's dream. Everything hinges on a retooled defense developing quickly and forgetting last year's late-season meltdown.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Mike DeBord didn't do anything fancy his first season back as coordinator. He knows the drill in Ann Arbor: establish the run to set up play-action passes. There's a variety of motion mixed with myriad personnel groupings. But it's mostly window dressing to create confusion for what's a classic NFL-style offense.

SKILL POSITIONS Loaded. Chad Henne is the classic dropback, stand-in-the-pocket Michigan triggerman. Entering his fourth year as a starter, Henne should work with a confident know-how that augments his natural ability. Though the staff loves to take shots downfield, this program always will be about a strong ground game. Mike Hart is neither the biggest nor the fastest running back, but he's a workhorse who can move the chains and rip off a big gainer on occasion. He never fumbles. Kevin Grady (if recovered from a knee injury) and Brandon Minor are maturing into dependable forces who can



Henne

MICHAEL McNAMARA / SN ARCHIVES

run inside and outside. What looked like a loaded group of receivers has become an area of concern. Mario Manningham will be an All-American, but Adrian Arrington's status is iffy after a spring suspension. If he doesn't return,

Quick hits

Stadium: Michigan (artificial, 107,501). **Site:** Ann Arbor, Mich.
Coach: Lloyd Carr (113-36, 12 years, 27 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Mike DeBord (2nd year, 12th at school)
Defensive coordinator: Ron English (2nd year, 5th at school)

Last league title won: 2004 (tie). **Last year not in a bowl:** 1974.
2006 record: 11-2, 7-1/T2nd Big Ten
Rose Bowl: Lost to USC, 32-18

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 WR Greg Mathews. A rangy target with speed and sticky hands, Mathews got his feet wet last year. Now, he may have to be the No. 2 receiver if Adrian Arrington doesn't return from suspension.

2 LB Austin Panter. The staff was so hungry for help at linebacker that it signed Panter from a junior college. He arrived in time for spring drills, where he turned heads with his blend of size and speed.

A Big Ten coach says ...

They will be potent on offense. But will they take it to the next level? I think I'll have a wait-and-see approach. ... With **Ron English** as coordinator, they were more aggressive on defense. They came after us more. And they were more confident because of their experience. But they lost some good players. Everyone wonders about those last two games. Well, I think Ohio State proved to be just better than everyone else, and I think Michigan was distracted in the Rose Bowl. ... It wouldn't surprise me if this was **Lloyd Carr's** last year. You hear rumors about his health.

Michigan will be without a proven No. 2 receiver. LaTerry Savoy is one option, but Greg Mathews is considered the team's best young wideout. Michigan frequently employs two-tight end sets, but the tight end spot looks troublesome because Carson Butler was kicked off the team following legal trouble. Mike Massey is capable but pedestrian.

OFFENSIVE LINE The effort to slim down paid dividends last season, as the group became more nimble. Expect the line to be strong again with three starters back. The biggest hole is at center, but Michigan is buzzing about the potential of Justin Boren. That makes right tackle the biggest concern. A solid left side is anchored by Jake Long, a prototype tackle who tinkered with going pro, and guard Adam Kraus, a classic mauler.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Ron English was promoted to coordinator from secondary coach last season—a brilliant move. English has mandated an aggressive, attacking defense that has unleashed the team's ample athletic ability. In short, this defense no longer is predictable.

FRONT SEVEN The top priority for a defense that yielded 942 yards and 74 points in the last two games of 2006 after dominating the first 11 games is solidifying the line. Coaches feel squatty Terrance Taylor will be an effective run-stuffer. The other tackle spot is shaky. Converted linebacker Brandon Graham could surprise. Will Johnson just looks like a "guy." Who will rush the passer with LaMarr Woodley gone? The team hopes Tim

Jamison will step up, but he struggles to stay healthy. The staff might slide Shawn Crable from linebacker to serve as a rush end. Stay tuned. The linebacker corps is being rehabbed. How desperate is Michigan? Carr signed just the second junior college transfer (Austin Panter) of his tenure to help fill the voids. Diminutive speedster Chris Graham will fill a spot.

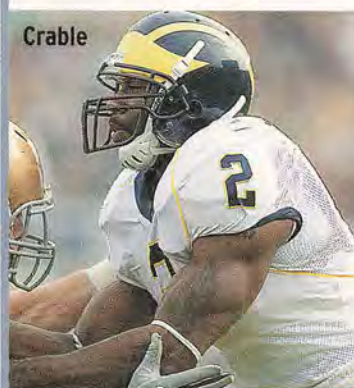
SECONDARY This was the fans' whipping unit last year, and the loss of cornerback Leon Hall doesn't help. Morgan Trent has experience but doesn't look like the answer. In fact, there's a good chance incoming freshman Donovan Warren could claim one corner slot. Brandon Harrison, a little guy who packs a big punch, is in the mix. Strong safety Jamar Adams is the star of the unit. He's a big hitter with instincts and speed. Veteran free safety Brandt Englemann, like Trent, could lose his job to a youngster.

SPECIAL TEAMS Zoltan Mesko has the tools to become a top punter. But the kicking situation is muddled. Bryan Wright is the favorite, but everyone is holding their breath. It's doubtful Michigan will find another return man like Steve Breaston, but Carlos Brown, Mathews and Stevie Brown are promising.

COACHING STAFF The changes Carr made before last season paid off, as the team came very close to playing in the BCS title game. There was one defection: Cornerbacks coach Ron Lee went to Minnesota. English is a head-coach-in-waiting who knows how to teach the details of the game.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Mike Hart	318	1,562	4.9	14	
Brandon Minor	42	238	5.7	2	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Chad Henne	203-328-8	2,508		22	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Adrian Arrington	40	544	13.6	8	
Mario Manningham	38	703	18.5	9	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Johnny Sears	5	89	17.8	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Jason Gingell	1	1	—	—	1
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Jamar Adams	39	8	47	3/13	
Morgan Trent	40	5	45	2/7	
Shawn Crable	28	9	37	10.5/40	
Sacks: Tim Jamison (5)					
Interceptions: Adams, Trent (1)					



Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Appalachian State		
9-8	Oregon		3-1
9-15	Notre Dame	47-21	2-3
9-22	▲ Penn State	17-10	5-0
9-29	at Northwestern	17-3	4-1
10-6	Eastern Michigan		5-0
10-13	Purdue		4-1
10-20	at Illinois		5-0
10-27	Minnesota	28-14	4-1
11-3	at Michigan State	31-13	5-0
11-10	■ at Wisconsin	27-13	4-1
11-17	● Ohio State	39-42	1-4

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to be upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 2nd

>The Series Ohio State (37-60-6):

Where have you gone, John Cooper? Since Jim Tressel took over, the Buckeyes have dominated this series. And Michigan has watched its fortunes diminish. It's vital that the Wolverines protect the Big House.

>The Showdown at Wisconsin: The Badgers are creating a buzz. This will be the Wolverines' chance to show that they still are one of the Big Ten's top teams.

>The Smack Big dreams, big hurdles. If this is a national title team, Michigan will have to prove it. The schedule opens and closes fast. Michigan's super-charged offense may have to carry it in September against three rugged foes. No Big Ten school finishes with a more challenging 1-2 punch.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	86	Mario Manningham (6-0, 186, Jr.)
	82	LaTerry Savoy (6-2, 205, So.)
LT	77	Jake Long (6-7, 313, Sr.)
	71	Mark Ortmann (6-6, 297, So.)
LG	57	Adam Kraus (6-6, 296, Sr.)
	78	Justin Schifano (6-4, 298, So.)
C	65	Justin Boren (6-3, 310, So.)
	60	David Moosman (6-4, 298, So.)
RG	73	Alex Mitchell (6-5, 313, Jr.)
	70	Jeremy Ciulla (6-4, 292, Jr.)
RT	71	Mark Ortmann (6-6, 297, So.)
	52	Steve Schilling (6-5, 297, Fr.)
TE	83	Mike Massey (6-4, 229, Jr.)
	42	Chris McLaurin (6-3, 236, So.)
WR	16	Adrian Arrington (6-3, 187, Jr.)
	13	Greg Mathews (6-3, 207, So.)
QB	7	Chad Henne (6-2, 224, Sr.)
	15	Ryan Mallett* (6-6, 247, Fr.)
RB	20	Mike Hart (5-9, 196, Sr.)
	4	Brandon Minor (6-0, 213, So.)
FB	33	Mark Moundros (6-1, 222, So.)
	32	Vince Helmuth* (6-1, 245, Fr.)
K	43	Bryan Wright (6-1, 215, So.)
KR	25	Johnny Sears (6-0, 189, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	90	Tim Jamison (6-3, 266, Jr.)
	92	Greg Banks (6-4, 264, Fr.)
T	67	Terrance Taylor (6-0, 310, Jr.)
	44	James McKinney (6-2, 281, So.)
T	97	Will Johnson (6-5, 291, Jr.)
	94	John Ferrara (6-4, 270, Fr.)
E	55	Brandon Graham (6-2, 276, So.)
	99	Adam Patterson (6-2, 262, So.)
SLB	2	Shawn Crable (6-5, 245, Sr.)
	45	Obi Eze (6-2, 243, So.)
MLB	49	John Thompson (6-1, 230, Jr.)
	54	Austin Panter (6-3, 231, Jr.)
WLB	37	Chris Graham (5-11, 225, Sr.)
	8	Jonas Mouton (6-2, 230, Fr.)
LCB	25	Johnny Sears (6-0, 189, So.)
		Donovan Warren* (6-0, 175, Fr.)
FS	30	Stevie Brown (6-0, 195, So.)
	31	Brandt Englemann (5-11, 206, Sr.)
SS	22	Jamar Adams (6-2, 212, Sr.)
	5	Charles Stewart (6-1, 205, Jr.)
RCB	14	Morgan Trent (6-1, 189, Jr.)
	27	Brandon Harrison (5-8, 195, Jr.)
P	41	Zoltan Mesko (6-4, 242, So.)
PR	25	Johnny Sears (6-0, 189, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

BADGERS

So what does Bret Bielema do for an encore? He capped his debut season by winning Big Ten coach of the year honors after leading Wisconsin to its highest single-season win total (12) in school history. What's next? The Badgers are primed to win a Big Ten title with a veteran roster and an accommo-

Quick hits

Stadium: Camp Randall (artificial, 80,321)
Site: Madison, Wis.

Coach: Bret Bielema (12-1, 1 year, 3 at school)

Offensive coordinator: Paul Chryst (3rd year, 4th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Mike Hankwitz (2nd year)

Last league title won: 1999.

Last year not in a bowl: 2001.

2006 record: 12-1, 7-1/T2nd Big Ten

Capital One Bowl: Beat Arkansas, 17-14

dating schedule. They need only for a steady quarterback to emerge.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Although many elements remain from the Barry Alvarez regime, it's safe to say Bielema has juiced up the offense. Credit coordinator Paul Chryst, who has dressed things up with myriad personnel groupings and formations. The Badgers will even morph into spread sets occasionally.

It's all about confusing opponents. But make no mistake: Everything is based on having a strong running game.

SKILL POSITIONS The only question here is a big one. Tyler Donovan and Allan Evridge will continue to battle for the quarterback job in training camp. Donovan was impressive in limited action last year while subbing for injured John Stocco. Bielema calls Donovan a "gamer," a guy who can make something out of nothing, which is good and bad. Evridge arrived last fall after transferring from Kansas State. Like Donovan, he is a good athlete who is taking to the offense.

P.J. Hill led the Big Ten in rushing last season—as a freshman—but some question Hill's durability. The staff thinks another megafreshman, John Clay, could work his way into the rotation.

The headliner of the receiving corps is tight end Travis Beckum, a converted linebacker. Once his blocking catches up to his receiving, he'll be one of the nation's best at his position. The sleeper of this unit could be wideout Paul Hubbard, a big target with speed and hops. Luke Swan is another burner who has the best hands on the team and has drawn the



MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Tyler Donovan. Or could it be Allan Evridge? Whomever wins the job must be more game manager than playmaker to take advantage of an array of weapons at running back and receiver.

2 FS Shane Carter. The only question on defense is at safety. And Carter, an inexperienced sophomore, will play a key role. He must show savvy in coverage and an ability to read formations and communicate schemes.

A Big Ten coach says ...

I don't think you can pick the Badgers to win the Big Ten because of their question at quarterback. They had some games won last year and didn't put **Tyler Donovan** in. That tells me something. ... RB **P.J. Hill** is a different kind of back than (Ron) Dayne. You could gang up and hit Dayne low. But Hill has good feet and can step over people. ... We love DE **Matt Shaughnessy**. He's an athletic guy. You can't cut him in the quick-passing game. ... CB **Jack Ikegwuonu** is good, but he has gotten in some trouble. He's a guy most teams wouldn't want on their roster.

attention of NFL scouts. And Bielema can't wait to take the wraps off true freshman David Gilreath.

OFFENSIVE LINE This unit has been the backbone of the program for years. That won't change, even with the loss of Outland Trophy winner Joe Thomas. Four starters return. Bielema loves talking about center Marcus Coleman, a late-comer to the position who is savvy at making calls and directing traffic. Eric Vanden Heuvel is a classic Wisconsin tackle—a wall of flesh who will help power the ground game.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Badgers stay vanilla in a 4-3 scheme on first and second downs. On third downs, they often switch to a "30" package that features an extra player in the back seven. That's when the Badgers turn up the heat with a variety of pressure packages.

FRONT SEVEN There's no shortage of experienced options up front. The headliner is tackle Jason Chapman, whose quick first step creates the illusion he's offside. Rangy end Matt Shaughnessy is poised to become a terror now that he's finally filling out. Bielema's linebackers are burners. Check out Jonathan Casillas, the second-fastest player on the team. DeAndre Levy also is strong and speedy, as is Elijah Hodge, whom Bielema thinks has more athletic ability and better instincts than brother Abdul, who was a star at Iowa.

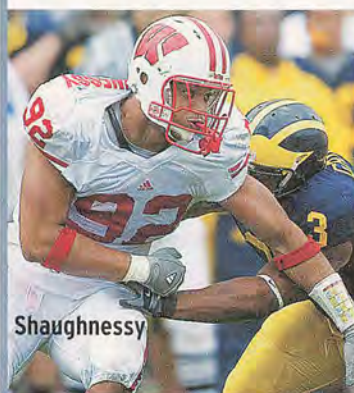
SECONDARY If Bielema has a worry, it's the prospect of playing two inexperienced safeties. One will be Shane Carter, the brother of former NFL great Cris Carter. Jack Ikegwuonu might be the best cornerback in the nation, and his uncommon blend of size and speed has the attention of pro scouts. Allen Langford is a capable counterpart, but he'll be pushed for his job.

SPECIAL TEAMS The Badgers have the best kicking duo in the Big Ten. Taylor Mehlhaff, who connected on 15 of 20 field goal tries last season, has a nice combination of power, accuracy and nerve. Ken DeBauche took a step back last year but still averaged 41.8 yards per punt. He is adept at placement and power. Bielema, looking for big improvement, will oversee all phases of the return and coverage teams.

COACHING STAFF This fast is becoming one of the best staffs in the Big Ten. Everyone returns, including Chryst. Credit Alvarez for giving Chryst a sweeter deal than any offensive coordinator in the Big Ten to keep him from taking a quarterbacks coaching job with the Dallas Cowboys. Defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz also is a keeper. There's nothing this war horse hasn't seen. Linebackers coach Dave Doeren, defensive backs coach Kerry Cooks, tight ends coach Bob Bostad and defensive line coach Randall McCray are rising stars.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
P.J. Hill	311	1,569	5.0	15	
Lance Smith	95	345	3.6	5	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Tyler Donovan	37-58-2	564		4	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Travis Beckum	61	903	14.8	5	
Luke Swan	35	595	17.0	5	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Jarvis Minton	15	282	18.8	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Taylor Mehlhaff	47	47	15	20	92
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Jonathan Casillas	53	30	83	12.5/38	
DeAndre Levy	26	24	50	7.5/44	
Jack Ikegwuonu	35	6	41	3.5/14	
Sacks: Levy (6)					
Interceptions: Allen Langford (3)					



Shaughnessy

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Washington State		1-0
9-8	at UNLV		4-1
9-15	The Citadel		
9-22	Iowa	24-21	1-4
9-29	Michigan State		3-2
10-6	at Illinois	30-24	4-1
10-13	▲ at Penn State	13-3	3-2
10-20	Northern Illinois		4-1
10-27	Indiana	52-17	3-2
11-3	■ at Ohio State		3-2
11-10	Michigan	13-27	1-4
11-17	● at Minnesota	48-12	4-1

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to be upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 7th

>The Series Iowa (40-40-2): Both programs continually climb over each other in a perpetual power struggle for elite Big Ten status. Wisconsin has it right now. Iowa wants it back. This is gonna be fun.

>The Showdown vs. Michigan: The last time the Wolverines visited, they got beat. The Badgers have to do it again in what should be a classic matchup between Wisconsin's defense and Michigan's offense.

>The Smack Dreaming big. If the Badgers can survive a trip to Penn State, it's not crazy to envision them being 9-0 as they enter a make-or-break November. One of those late-season games is a trip to Ohio State, which is back on the schedule for the first time since 2004.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	19	Paul Hubbard (6-4, 215, Sr.)
	10	Isaac Anderson (5-11, 170, So.)
LT	78	Jake Bscherer (6-7, 297, So.)
	68	Gabe Carimi (6-8, 292, Fr.)
LG	75	Andy Kemp (6-6, 322, Jr.)
	74	John Moffitt (6-4, 310, Fr.)
C	65	Marcus Coleman (6-6, 302, Sr.)
	58	Brad Thorson (6-4, 295, Fr.)
RG	63	Kraig Urbik (6-6, 330, Jr.)
	76	Bill Nagy (6-4, 300, Fr.)
RT	71	Eric Vanden Heuvel (6-7, 324, Jr.)
	64	Danny Kaye (6-8, 327, Sr.)
TE	9	Travis Beckum (6-4, 221, Jr.)
	43	Andy Crooks (6-3, 268, Sr.)
WR	1	Luke Swan (6-0, 193, Sr.)
	3	Maurice Moore (5-11, 165, Fr.)
QB	12	Tyler Donovan (6-1, 187, Sr.)
	4	Allan Evridge (6-2, 225, Jr.)
RB	39	P.J. Hill (5-11, 222, So.)
	5	Lance Smith (5-10, 210, So.)
FB	34	Bill Rentmeester (6-0, 250, Jr.)
	44	Chris Pressley (6-1, 271, Jr.)
K	10	Taylor Mehlhaff (5-11, 185, Sr.)
KR	8	Josh Nettles (5-10, 176, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
LE	34	Kurt Ware (6-4, 282, Sr.)
	56	Brandon Kelly (6-4, 255, Sr.)
LT	91	Jason Chapman (6-4, 289, Jr.)
	54	Mike Newkirk (6-3, 263, Jr.)
RT	96	Nick Hayden (6-5, 300, Sr.)
	59	Brandon Hoey (6-5, 290, Fr.)
RE	92	Matt Shaughnessy (6-6, 242, Jr.)
	45	Kirk DeCremer (6-5, 239, Fr.)
SLB	11	DeAndre Levy (6-3, 223, Jr.)
	14	Culmer Ste. Jean (6-1, 220, Fr.)
MLB	52	Elijah Hodge (6-1, 232, So.)
	48	Josh Neal (5-10, 245, Jr.)
WLB	2	Jonathan Casillas (6-2, 212, Jr.)
	47	Jaeverly McFadden (6-3, 224, So.)
LCB	17	Allen Langford (5-11, 196, Jr.)
	8	Josh Nettles (5-10, 176, So.)
FS	25	Shane Carter (6-2, 205, So.)
	32	Kim Royston (5-11, 185, So.)
SS	28	Aubrey Pleasant (6-0, 206, So.)
	15	Jay Valai (5-9, 193, Fr.)
RCB	6	Jack Ikegwuonu (6-1, 201, Jr.)
	3	Ben Strickland (5-9, 175, Sr.)
P	94	Ken DeBauche (6-2, 220, Jr.)
PR	1	Luke Swan (6-0, 193, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman



NITTANY LIONS

Now that Joe Paterno has re-established Penn State as a legitimate program, the buzz in Happy Valley is all about winning the Big Ten championship. The offense will be the key; if the Nittany Lions find big-play capability, they could be the league's dark-horse candidate.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The days of "three yards and a cloud of dust" ended when Galen Hall arrived as coordinator in 2004. The Nittany Lions run multiple sets that feature three and four receivers, an empty backfield and the option. They've even been known to snap the ball directly to a receiver.

SKILL POSITIONS Quarterback Anthony Morelli showed signs late last season that he might shed his underachiever label. He showed savvy in the pocket, and now he's poised for a big senior sendoff. Led by Deon Butler, the receiving corps may be the best in the Big Ten. The group, as a whole, lacks size, though, and it took a step back last season because defensive backs could focus on coverage—Morelli wasn't a threat to tuck and run. The Nittany Lions hope big wideout Chris Bell



Morelli

Quick hits

Stadium: Beaver (grass, 107,282).
Site: State College, Pa.
Coach: Joe Paterno (363-181-3, 41 years, 56 at school)

Offensive coordinator: Galen Hall (4th year)
Defensive coordinator: Tom Bradley (8th year, 29th at school)

Last league title won: 2005 (tie).

Last year not in a bowl: 2004.

2006 record: 9-4, 5-3/T4th Big Ten

Outback Bowl: Beat Tennessee, 20-10

will help solve their struggles in the red zone. Andrew Quarles is an athletic tight end and an emerging star. He may be the school's best at the position since Kyle Brady, a 1995 first-round draft pick.

With versatile Tony Hunt gone, all eyes will be on running back. Austin Scott, who redshirted last season with an injury, is expected to carry much of the load, but he lacks flash. Ditto for Evan Royster.

OFFENSIVE LINE

This has been a trouble spot for years. Until departed tackle Levi Brown was selected in the first round of the 2007 NFL draft, Penn State hadn't had an offensive lineman picked in Round 1 since 1996. How worried are the coaches about their

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 **WR Chris Bell.** No doubt, the Nittany Lions have talent and speed at receiver, but there's not much size. Enter Bell. He's a big, looming target, and he must become a factor, especially in the red zone.

2 **DE Aaron Maybin.** He still needs to add bulk, but Maybin is quick off the ball and plays with a nonstop motor. He received rave reviews last year on the scout team. Now, he has to help amp up a pedestrian pass rush.

MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES



A Big Ten coach says ...

I don't see them changing much. ... I think coordinator **Tom Bradley** does the best job of coaching defense in the league. They just don't usually have a weakness where you can attack them. ... QB **Anthony Morelli** is a strong-armed kid who has improved a lot. I didn't like him earlier in his career, but he sort of had a coming-out party in the bowl game. ... **Joe Paterno** got after the offensive line last year. They weren't that good against us. I know he signed a couple junior college guys to help. I guess you do what you have to do.

Big Uglies? Penn State signed two junior college transfers, the first of any sort since 1985. Coaches hope Ako Poti is an instant hit at a troubling left guard slot. The staff will build around a veteran center, short but powerful A.Q. Shipley.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Tom Bradley has made a concerted effort to move from a size-oriented defense to one built on speed. That has made it difficult for opponents to beat Penn State on the edge or with deep passes. It also means Bradley rarely has to gamble with gimmick coverages or fronts, which allows Penn State to chase the ball from its base 4-3 set.

FRONT SEVEN Penn State has reclaimed its title of Linebacker U. All-American Paul Posluszny is gone, but the Nittany Lions are loaded at the position. Dan Connor, also an All-American, moves inside to Posluszny's spot, and Sean Lee has great speed on the outside. There are concerns on the line. With underrated tackles Jay Alford and Ed Johnson gone, the team needs massive Phillip Taylor to step up and be the anchor on the inside. The end spots are up in the air; someone will have to provide a pass rush.

SECONDARY Everything begins with Justin King, one of the nation's best cornerbacks. He needs to improve against the run, but he is unparalleled in coverage. The status of star safety Anthony Scirrotto is iffy following a spring incident that resulted

in arrest. If he misses significant time, the unit will be hampered. Scirrotto isn't incredibly athletic, but he's a ballhawk who led the Big Ten in interceptions last season and makes plays. At the other corner spot, emerging A.J. Wallace could unseat Lydell Sargeant. Wallace is big and has an extra gear.

SPECIAL TEAMS The kicking game could be a source of trouble. The departure of punter Jeremy Kapinos hurts tremendously; his combination of touch and power often eliminated opponents' return games. Kicker Kevin Kelly showed promise in his debut in 2005, but he has been shaky since. The return game is solid. Wallace provides a nice combination of speed and instincts on kickoff returns, and on punt returns, Derrick Williams can make the first man miss and reach top speed in a few steps.

COACHING STAFF Last season Paterno had to dash off the field at Ohio State with stomach problems, got plowed into at a practice and was run over on the sideline at Wisconsin and broke his leg. But JoePa, 80, always comes back. Staff stability has been a secret to Paterno's success. Credit Hall for dragging the offense into the 21st century. Bradley, Paterno's righthand man, is an unmatched tactician. Mike McQueary, a rising star, has been credited with reviving Penn State's recruiting machine. Few defensive line coaches have put as many players in the NFL as Larry Johnson.

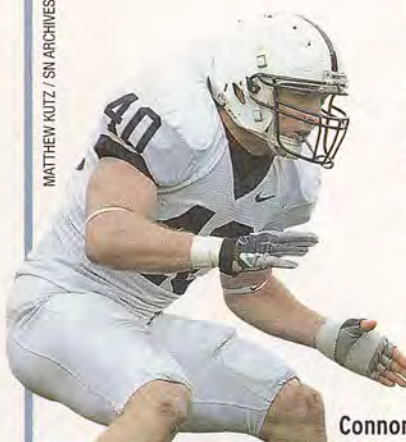
Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Rodney Kinlaw	39	199	5.1	0	
A.J. Wallace	8	153	19.1	1	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Anthony Morelli	208-386-8	2,424		11	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Deon Butler	48	637	13.3	2	
Jordan Norwood	45	472	10.5	2	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
A.J. Wallace	16	388	24.2	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Kevin Kelly	30	30	22	34	96
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Dan Connor	70	43	113	9/46	
Sean Lee	47	43	90	8/51	
Anthony Scirrotto	42	16	58	-/-	
Sacks: Lee (5.5)					

Sacks: Lee (5.5)

Interceptions: Scirrotto (6)

MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES



Connor

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	3	Deon Butler (5-10, 168, Jr.)
	24	Jordan Norwood (5-10, 172, Jr.)
LT	76	Gerald Cadogan (6-5, 313, Jr.)
		Nerraw McCormack (6-5, 290, Jr.)
LG	77	Lou Eliades (6-4, 305, Fr.)
	64	Rich Ohrnberger (6-2, 289, Jr.)
C	57	A.Q. Shipley (6-1, 293, Jr.)
	69	Doug Klopacz (6-3, 276, Fr.)
RG	78	John Shaw (6-4, 303, Sr.)
	64	Rich Ohrnberger (6-2, 289, Jr.)
RT	73	Dennis Landolt (6-4, 294, So.)
	63	Joe Toriello (6-4, 300, Jr.)
TE	10	Andrew Quarless (6-5, 252, So.)
	81	Brennan Coakley (6-5, 249, So.)
WR	2	Derrick Williams (6-0, 203, Jr.)
	19	Chris Bell (6-2, 210, So.)
QB	14	Anthony Morelli (6-4, 232, Sr.)
	17	Darryll Clark (6-2, 232, Jr.)
RB	33	Austin Scott (6-0, 222, Sr.)
	20	Rodney Kinlaw (5-9, 201, Sr.)
FB	34	Matt Hahn (6-0, 236, Sr.)
	38	Dan Lawlor (6-2, 244, Jr.)
K	23	Kevin Kelly (5-7, 167, Jr.)
KR	12	A.J. Wallace (6-1, 195, So.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Fla. International		
9-8	▲ Notre Dame	17-41	2-3
9-15	Buffalo		0-1
9-22	■ at Michigan	10-17	0-5
9-29	at Illinois	26-12	4-1
10-6	Iowa		0-5
10-13	Wisconsin	3-13	2-3
10-20	at Indiana		5-0
10-27	● Ohio State	6-28	1-4
11-3	Purdue	12-0	3-2
11-10	at Temple	47-0	5-0
11-17	at Michigan State	17-13	4-1

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to be upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 6th

>The Series Wisconsin (4-8): Forget Michigan and Ohio State. Penn State isn't on that level. The Badgers are the Nittany Lions' measuring stick. And they fall short. Before dreaming really big, Penn State has to start beating Wisconsin.

>The Showdown vs. Ohio State: This is a showdown between teams that harbor dark-horse Big Ten title dreams. The Buckeyes have been a nemesis since the Nits joined the Big Ten, holding a 9-5 edge.

>The Smack Road warriors. Any dreams of grandeur could be squashed by a difficult September, which includes a trip to Michigan. The good news: That Ann Arbor junkie is the only scary road game. That means it's key to protect home turf.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
LE	47	Josh Gaines (6-1, 264, Jr.)
	59	Aaron Maybin (6-4, 238, Fr.)
LT	90	Phil Taylor (6-4, 337, So.)
	91	Jared Odrick (6-5, 280, So.)
RT	97	Abe Koroma (6-3, 312, Fr.)
	93	Chris Baker (6-2, 305, So.)
RE	48	Maurice Evans (6-2, 269, So.)
	87	Chris Rogers (6-2, 261, Jr.)
SLB	45	Sean Lee (6-2, 232, Jr.)
	46	Tyrell Sales (6-2, 237, Jr.)
MLB	40	Dan Connor (6-3, 233, Sr.)
	52	Dontey Brown (6-2, 236, Jr.)
WLB	18	Navorro Bowman (6-1, 228, Fr.)
	15	Bani Gbadyu (6-0, 217, Fr.)
LCB	1	Justin King (6-0, 186, Jr.)
	6	Willie Harriott (5-8, 181, So.)
FS	11	Tony Davis (5-10, 197, Jr.)
	37	Spencer Ridenhour (6-0, 193, Jr.)
SS	7	Anthony Scirrotto (6-0, 195, Jr.)
	29	Cedric Jeffries (6-2, 207, Fr.)
RCB	12	A.J. Wallace (6-1, 195, So.)
	10	Lydell Sargeant (5-10, 186, Jr.)
P	41	Jeremy Boone (5-9, 183, So.)
PR	2	Derrick Williams (6-0, 203, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

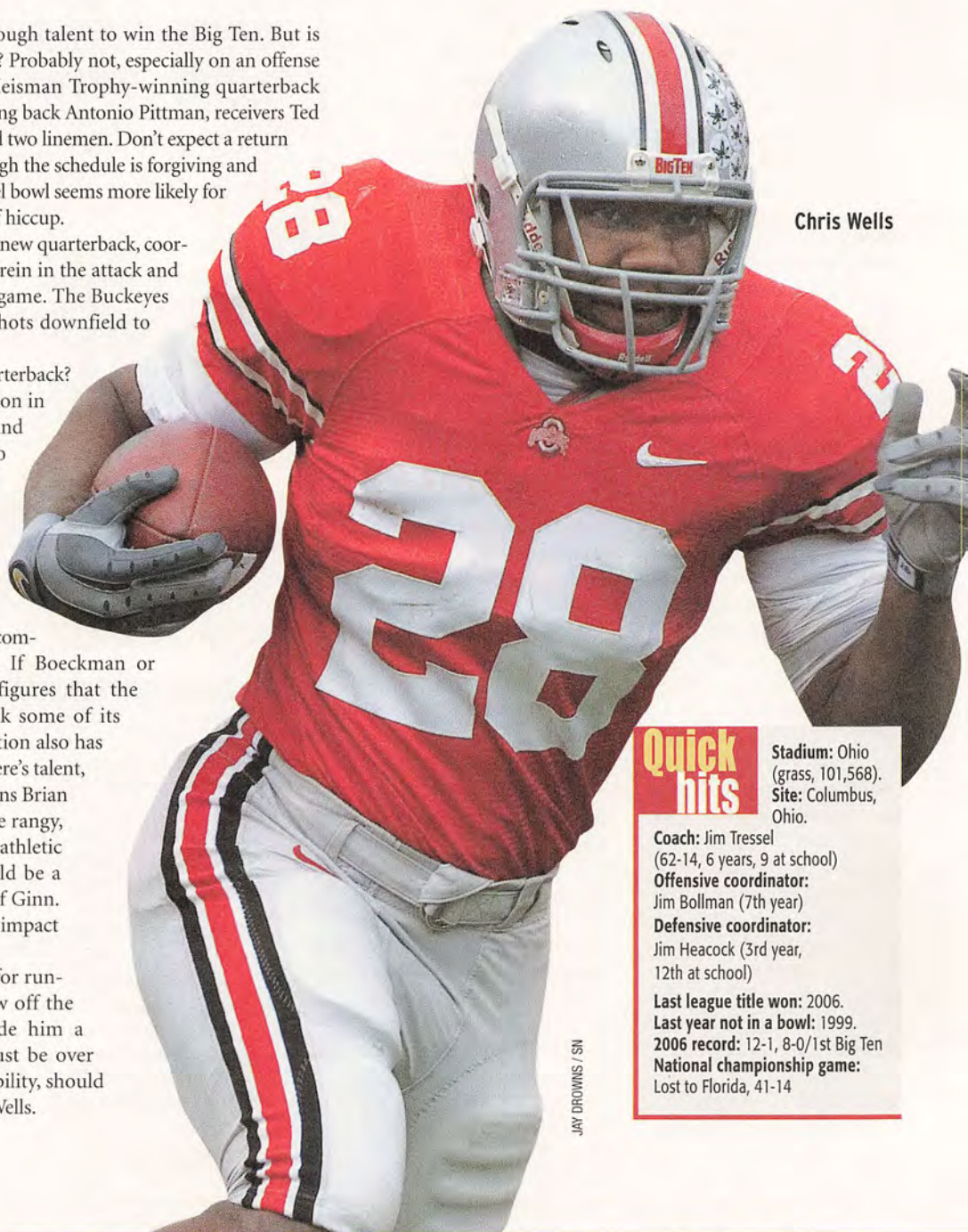
BUCKEYES

No one denies there's enough talent to win the Big Ten. But is there enough leadership? Probably not, especially on an offense that has been gutted. Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Troy Smith is gone, as are running back Antonio Pittman, receivers Ted Ginn and Anthony Gonzalez and two linemen. Don't expect a return to the BCS title game, even though the schedule is forgiving and the defense is loaded. A mid-level bowl seems more likely for a program that will suffer a brief hiccup.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY With a new quarterback, coordinator Jim Bollman figures to rein in the attack and rebuild it around the running game. The Buckeyes still need to take play-action shots downfield to keep defenses honest.

SKILL POSITIONS Who's the quarterback? That's the million dollar question in Columbus. Todd Boeckman and Rob Schoenholtz will continue to battle in camp. Both are big, strong-armed and traditional. Also in the mix is Antonio Henton, the only candidate who might be able to match Smith's knack for improvisation. But he's also the youngest competitor and the longest shot. If Boeckman or Schoenholtz wins the job, it figures that the offense will have to scale back some of its spread-option principles. Attrition also has hit the receiving corps hard. There's talent, but it's mostly unproven. Veterans Brian Robiskie and Brian Hartline are rangy, try-hard guys with underrated athletic ability. Speedy Ray Small could be a difference-maker in the mold of Ginn. Newcomers will get a chance to impact the unit.

Now would be a good time for running back Chris Wells to show off the strength and speed that made him a prized recruit. Wells, who must be over fumbling woes and show durability, should get help from speedy Maurice Wells.



Chris Wells

Quick hits

Stadium: Ohio (grass, 101,568).
Site: Columbus, Ohio.

Coach: Jim Tressel (62-14, 6 years, 9 at school)

Offensive coordinator:

Jim Bollman (7th year)

Defensive coordinator:

Jim Heacock (3rd year, 12th at school)

Last league title won: 2006.

Last year not in a bowl: 1999.

2006 record: 12-1, 8-0/1st Big Ten

National championship game: Lost to Florida, 41-14

JAY DROWNS / SN

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Todd Boeckman. He's a coach's kid and a small-school product who has bided his time since 2004 while learning the offense. He has terrific size and a rocket arm. Plus, he's more nimble than he looks.

2 DT Doug Worthington. This 6-7 former end brings an interesting size dimension to the interior line, the only area of the defense that's a question. Worthington's athletic skills must translate into playmaking ability.

A Big Ten coach says ...

I think Ohio State has had more talent than Michigan in recent years. It'll be very interesting to see what happens at quarterback. They lost a good one (Troy Smith). I'm not sure how talented the guys are who are competing to play quarterback. For sure, I don't think you'll see the option run as much without Smith.

... I like LB **James Laurinaitis**, but I don't think he's as good as A.J. Hawk. ... **Chris Wells** is a talented runner, but he needs to grow up if he's gonna carry the running game. ... They may be the surprise team in the league and win it all again.

OFFENSIVE LINE Mammoth right tackle Kirk Barton is the cornerstone of the offense's most experienced unit. Pencil him in for all-conference honors. Left tackle Alex Boone is even bigger—and maybe even better—than Barton. With the flanks fortified, the interior has to replace the center and right guard. Insiders say Jim Cordle could develop into a special center.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Veteran coordinator Jim Heacock doesn't gamble much, relying instead on his team's outstanding athleticism to make plays. But Heacock will show a variety of coverages and blitz schemes that keep quarterbacks guessing without compromising what should be the conference's best defense.

FRONT SEVEN All eyes will focus on a retooled line. Vernon Gholston provides an answer at one end spot. He's a monster playmaker who can be unblockable at times. Lawrence Wilson must show he can be a capable bookend. Tackle is the area of concern. Heacock is hoping 6-7 Doug Worthington can fill the role of run-stuffer and anchor the middle so that an active and athletic linebacking corps can operate with abandon. Middle man James Laurinaitis is the unquestioned leader of a big-play unit that also includes Marcus Freeman on the weak side and Larry Grant on the strong side.

SECONDARY This unit will be built around cornerback Malcolm Jenkins, who has the size, speed and experience to rank among the best at his position nationally. The other corner slot is up for grabs.

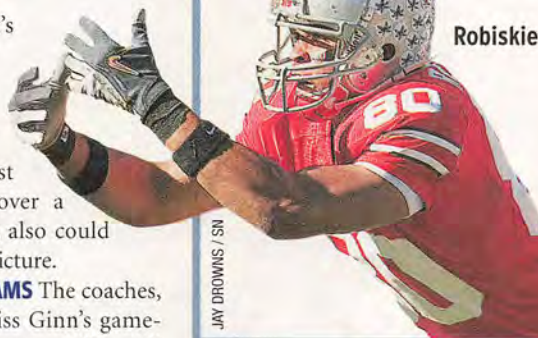
Donald Washington has limitations. Auditions also are being conducted at free safety. Nick Patterson could be that guy but not without being pushed. Jamario O'Neal, the strong safety, needs to mature and take fewer risks for a second

ondary that's seeking stability.

Anderson Russell, who must show he's over a knee injury, also could fit into the picture.

SPECIAL TEAMS The coaches, who will miss Ginn's game-breaking return skills, will sort through a list of speedy options well into August. The kicking game should be strong. A.J. Trapasso ranks among the Big Ten's best punters, and kicker Aaron Pettrey displayed consistency—and plenty of oomph—in his debut last season.

COACHING STAFF Jim Tressel, the unquestioned king of Big Ten coaches, also is the school's most beloved coach since Woody Hayes. That's because of his knack for turning huge expectations into huge results. Tressel's accomplishments have come amid staff turnover, a product of success. This year, he hired Taver Johnson to replace cornerbacks coach Tim Beckman, who became defensive coordinator at Oklahoma State. The newest rising star on this staff is linebackers coach Luke Fickell.



JAY DROWNS / SN

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Chris Wells	104	576	5.5	7
Maurice Wells	46	171	3.7	1

Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD
Todd Boeckman	2-3-0	19	0

Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Brian Robiskie	29	383	13.2	5
Brian Hartline	17	256	15.1	2

Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Jamario O'Neal	2	48	24.0	0

Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Aaron Pettrey	55	58	8	11	79

Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.
James Laurinaitis	53	62	115	8.5/44
Marcus Freeman	34	37	71	2.5/8
Malcolm Jenkins	40	15	55	4.5/11

Sacks: Vernon Gholston (8.5)

Interceptions: Laurinaitis (5)

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Youngstown State		
9-8	Akron		4-1
9-15	at Washington		3-2
9-22	Northwestern	54-10	4-1
9-29	at Minnesota	44-0	4-1
10-6	▲ at Purdue		3-2
10-13	Kent State		1-0
10-20	Michigan State	38-7	5-0
10-27	at Penn State	28-6	4-1
11-3	● Wisconsin		2-3
11-10	Illinois	17-10	4-1
11-17	■ at Michigan	42-39	4-1

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to be upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 5th

>The Series Michigan (60-37-6): Ohio State's rise to elite status has coincided with its dominance of the Wolverines the past six years. The Buckeyes have won two of the last three in Ann Arbor. A win this year would ruin Michigan's title hopes—again.

>The Showdown vs. Wisconsin: The Buckeyes may be playing the role of spoiler against the Badgers team. The schools haven't met since 2004. Each team will be banking on a new quarterback.

>The Smack Fast start. There's a notable lack of a marquee nonconference foe. Maybe that's a good thing, considering the questions on offense. Expect an 8-0 start. That's when things will get interesting for a program that may be in transition.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	4	Ray Small (6-0, 175, So.)
	5	Albert Dukes (6-1, 190, Jr.)
LT	75	Alex Boone (6-8, 325, Jr.)
	73	Josh Kerr (6-5, 283, Fr.)
LG	71	Steve Rehring (6-8, 329, Jr.)
	67	Kyle Mitchum (6-5, 295, Jr.)
C	64	Jim Cordle (6-4, 285, So.)
	77	Connor Smith (6-5, 295, Fr.)
RG	63	Ben Person (6-4, 315, Jr.)
	70	Bryant Browning (6-4, 328, Fr.)
RT	74	Kirk Barton (6-6, 310, Sr.)
	79	Jon Skinner (6-5, 300, Jr.)
TE	88	Rory Nicol (6-5, 250, Jr.)
	86	Jake Ballard (6-7, 255, So.)
WR	80	Brian Robiskie (6-3, 195, Jr.)
	18	Devon Lyons (6-4, 214, Jr.)
QB	17	Todd Boeckman (6-5, 235, Jr.)
	11	Robbie Schoenholtz (6-6, 240, So.)
RB	28	Chris Wells (6-1, 230, So.)
	34	Maurice Wells (5-10, 190, Jr.)
FB	49	Dionte Johnson (6-0, 234, Sr.)
	16	Trever Robinson (6-0, 220, Sr.)
K	20	Aaron Pettrey (6-1, 195, So.)
KR	4	Ray Small (6-0, 175, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	87	Lawrence Wilson (6-6, 270, Jr.)
	9	Robert Rose (6-5, 260, So.)
T	92	Todd Denlinger (6-3, 280, So.)
	93	Nader Abdallah (6-5, 310, Jr.)
T	84	Doug Worthington (6-7, 275, So.)
	72	Dexter Larimore (6-3, 275, Fr.)
E	50	Vernon Gholston (6-4, 260, Jr.)
	78	Alex Barrow (6-5, 275, Jr.)
SLB	6	Larry Grant (6-3, 225, Sr.)
	55	Curtis Terry (6-2, 234, Sr.)
MLB	33	James Laurinaitis (6-3, 244, Jr.)
	38	Austin Spitler (6-3, 242, So.)
WLB	1	Marcus Freeman (6-2, 242, Jr.)
	51	Ross Homan (6-1, 237, So.)
LCB	2	Malcolm Jenkins (6-1, 202, Jr.)
	13	Andre Amos (6-1, 180, So.)
FS	23	Nick Patterson (6-2, 210, Jr.)
	8	Aaron Gant (6-0, 205, So.)
SS	3	Jamario O'Neal (6-1, 200, Jr.)
	4	Kurt Coleman (5-11, 185, So.)
RCB	20	Donald Washington (6-1, 195, So.)
	19	Brandon Underwood (6-2, 180, Jr.)
P	15	A.J. Trapasso (6-1, 220, So.)
PR	4	Ray Small (6-0, 175, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

HAWKEYES

Iowa has fallen. Can it get up? Count on it. The Hawkeyes will regain the mojo that saw them play in four consecutive New Year's bowls before last season's 6-7 flop, the school's first losing season since 2000. Coach Kirk Ferentz knows the culprits: injuries, special teams breakdowns, turnovers. The key is quarterback Jake Christensen, who will need the support of a veteran cast while he adjusts to being a BMO.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The scheme took on an improvisational bent under quarterback Drew Tate. Now that's he's gone, look for Iowa to keep things simple. That means the Hawkeyes want to run to set up the pass. The formations will vary, but this team often will line up in a traditional two-back, two-wideout set.

SKILL POSITIONS The offense belongs to Christensen, who showed promise while subbing for the injured Tate last season. Christensen is a coach's son who plays with a swagger. A lefty who has more touch than Tate, Christensen is a weight room warrior who prefers to move in the pocket and make a play with his arm instead of his feet. Christensen will have ample weapons behind him, led by running back Albert Young. He's the face of the team, the ultimate program guy who seemingly always is battling an injury. Pencil in Young for 1,000 yards rushing. He is ably backed up by Damian Sims and Shonn Greene, who could red-shirt if he's not needed. At this time last year, receiver was a huge question. No more. There's a bevy of big, fleet pass catchers, starting with by Dominique Douglas and Andy Brodell. And even the loss of tight end Scott Chandler is buffeted by



Klinkenborg

Quick hits

Stadium: Kinnick (grass, 70,585). **Site:** Iowa City, Iowa.
Coach: Kirk Ferentz (55-43, 8 years, 17 at school; 67-64

overall, 11 years)

Offensive coordinator: Ken O'Keefe (9th year)

Defensive coordinator: Norm Parker (9th year)

Last league title won: 2004 (tie).

Last year not in a bowl: 2000.

2006 record: 6-7, 2-6/T8th Big Ten

Alamo Bowl: Lost to Texas, 26-24

ALBERT DICKSON / SN

2-POINT conversion

GET IT
DONE
OR ELSE

1 QB Jake Christensen. He'll be surrounded by good receivers and running backs, and the line has potential. Christensen must deliver steady passes and limit mistakes for what could be a good offense.

2 FS Brett Greenwood. The defense needs a quarterback in the secondary. Enter Greenwood, a youngster with promise. He has displayed savvy but needs to hone his coverage skills.



A Big Ten coach says ...

I'm looking forward to playing them. **Kirk Ferentz** won't admit it, but the guy he's most happy to see leave is Drew Tate. He was a competitor, but he also was a hard guy to get along with. He was hard on his teammates. But I don't think QB **Jake Christensen** will be much. ... RB **Albert Young** is a journeyman back. He doesn't strike fear in you. But if you don't wrap him up, he'll make yards against you. ... I find it hard to believe they won't miss TE Scott Chandler. You talk about a guy who was a productive player.

the continued emergence of Tony Moeaki.

OFFENSIVE LINE Start wringing your hands, Herky. This group was a disaster last season because of myriad injuries that ruined any chance to develop chemistry. At one point, Iowa was down to its fourth-string center. The situation is exacerbated by the fact holes must be filled. Left tackle Dace Richardson is primed to become one of the Big Ten's best. Seth Olsen looks like a solid bookend to Richardson, and Rafael Eubanks is set to become an elite center. The big question is guard play. Good thing Ferentz is a line guru.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Iowa lines up in a 4-3 scheme, rarely blitzes or stunts and typically runs vanilla coverages. If opponents are going to score, they'll have to chip away with 10- and 11-play drives because Hawkeyes coordinator Norm Parker stresses that big plays must be eliminated.

FRONT SEVEN There's veteran talent galore, but staying healthy will be crucial. With key personnel dinged up, Iowa's line often was pushed around last season. The tackles are undersized, and rely on quickness and tenacity—traits epitomized by Mitch King, who is proof that heart matters more than size. If end Kenny Iwebema can bring heat off the edge, it will make life easier for a secondary that's a work in progress. End Bryan Mattison reminds some of former Hawkeye Aaron Kampman. Middle linebacker Mike Klinkenborg

and weakside linebacker Mike Humpal haven't made anyone forget Chad Greenway or Abdul Hodge, but they are classic brawlers who overdose on effort. Outside linebacker A.J. Edds is an emerging talent.

SECONDARY This group is key to the defense's effectiveness. The unit was hurt last year by the line's inability to get a consistent pass rush. The Hawkeyes need a couple of ballhawking safeties who have a knack for playing downhill. Pencil in speedy veteran Harold Dalton at one spot. The other slot is wide open, with former walk-on Brett Greenwood among the leading contenders. Ferentz feels comfortable with his top three cornerbacks; one of them, Charles Godfrey, is brilliant in run support and OK in coverage.

SPECIAL TEAMS Punter Ryan Donahue has shown power, but who will kick? Austin Signor and a walk-on will battle throughout fall camp. At least Signor has some game experience.

COACHING STAFF Iowa caused jaws to drop last year when it made Ferentz the highest-paid coach in the Big Ten. Heady stuff for a guy who hasn't taken Iowa to the Rose Bowl and is 13-12 the past two years. But Ferentz has led Iowa to bowls in each of the past six seasons; plus, he's a state hero who seems bent on remaining in Iowa City despite the constant pull of the NFL. A secret to Ferentz's success has been staff continuity. This group ranks among the best in the Big Ten.

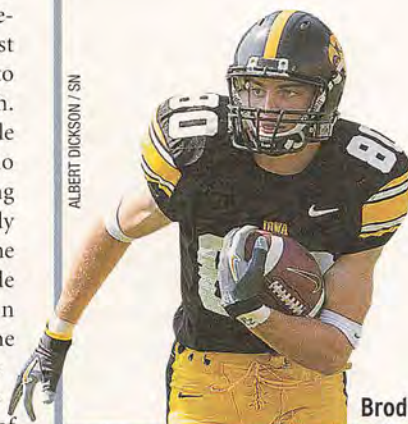
Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Albert Young	178	779	4.4	7	
Damian Sims	132	664	5.0	6	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Jake Christensen	23-35-2	285		2	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Dominique Douglas	49	654	13.3	2	
Andy Brodell	39	724	18.6	5	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Damian Sims	10	184	18.4	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Austin Signor	5	5	2	2	11
Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Mike Klinkenborg	61	68	129	5/12	
Charles Godfrey	61	22	83	2/2	
Bryan Mattison	30	29	59	10.5/74	
Sacks: Mattison (6.5)					

Sacks: Mattison (6.5)

Interceptions: Mike Humpal, Adam Shada (3)

ALBERT DICKSON / SN



Brodell

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	80	Andy Brodell (6-3, 193, Jr.)
	89	James Cleveland (6-1, 185, Fr.)
LT	78	Dace Richardson (6-6, 306, Jr.)
	60	Kyle Calloway (6-7, 295, So.)
LG	68	Andy Kuempel (6-7, 295, So.)
	74	Dan Doering (6-7, 290, So.)
C	52	Rafael Eubanks (6-3, 288, So.)
	58	Rob Bruggeman (6-3, 280, Jr.)
RG	75	Wesley Aeschliman (6-8, 315, Jr.)
	61	Travis Meade (6-0, 280, So.)
RT	71	Seth Olsen (6-5, 301, Jr.)
	72	Tyler Blum (6-6, 260, So.)
TE	81	Tony Moeaki (6-4, 250, Jr.)
	83	Brandon Myers (6-4, 242, Jr.)
WR	88	Dominique Douglas (6-1, 186, So.)
	86	Trey Stross (6-3, 190, So.)
QB	6	Jake Christensen (6-1, 205, So.)
	8	Arvell Nelson (6-4, 175, Fr.)
RB	21	Albert Young (5-10, 209, Sr.)
	28	Damian Sims (5-9, 185, Sr.)
FB	35	Tom Busch (5-11, 231, Sr.)
	38	Jordan McLaughlin (6-0, 227, Jr.)
K	39	Austin Signor (6-4, 230, So.)
KR	23	Shonn Greene (5-11, 225, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	vs. Northern Illinois*	24-14	5-0
9-8	Syracuse	20-13, 2OT	2-1
9-15	• at Iowa State	27-17	3-2
9-22	■ at Wisconsin	21-24	4-1
9-29	Indiana	28-31	3-2
10-6	▲ at Penn State		5-0
10-13	Illinois	24-7	4-1
10-20	at Purdue	47-17	4-1
10-27	Michigan State		3-2
11-3	at Northwestern	7-21	3-2
11-10	Minnesota	24-34	4-1
11-17	Western Michigan		0-1

*at Chicago

■ Toughest game • Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 10th

>The Series at Iowa State (36-18):

Despite holding every conceivable advantage over Iowa State, Iowa has struggled in this series recently. The Cyclones have a new coach: Gene Chizik. This is a chance for Kirk Ferentz to show him who's the boss.

>The Showdown at Wisconsin: The Badgers have replaced Iowa as the rising young darling of the Big Ten. The winner figures to be the team whose new quarterback has developed fastest.

>The Smack Built for success. No Ohio State ... no Michigan. Nice. This is the perfect low-calorie menu for a listing program to get fat and happy. If the Hawkeyes can split road games at Wisconsin and at Penn State, this could be a special season.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	92	Ken Iwebema (6-4, 270, Sr.)
	94	Adrian Clayborn (6-3, 250, Fr.)
T	53	Matt Kroul (6-3, 271, Jr.)
	59	Anton Narinskiy (6-4, 260, Jr.)
T	47	Mitch King (6-3, 264, Jr.)
	59	Anton Narinskiy (6-4, 260, Jr.)
E	99	Bryan Mattison (6-3, 272, Sr.)
	98	Chad Geary (6-3, 320, So.)
SLB	49	A.J. Edds (6-4, 224, So.)
	42	Jeremiha Hunter (6-2, 217, Fr.)
MLB	40	Mike Klinkenborg (6-2, 240, Sr.)
	41	Bryon Gattas (6-1, 233, Sr.)
WLB	44	Mike Humpal (6-2, 232, Sr.)
	43	Pat Angerer (6-1, 222, So.)
LCB	19	Adam Shada (6-1, 185, Sr.)
	29	Bradley Fletcher (6-2, 195, Jr.)
FS	30	Brett Greenwood (6-0, 185, Fr.)
	11	Marcus Wilson (6-3, 198, So.)
SS	2	Harold Dalton (6-1, 192, Jr.)
	18	Lance Tillison (6-2, 205, Fr.)
RCB	13	Charles Godfrey (6-1, 208, Sr.)
	29	Bradley Fletcher (6-2, 195, Jr.)
P	5	Ryan Donahue (6-3, 180, Fr.)
PR	80	Andy Brodell (6-3, 193, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman



PURDUE

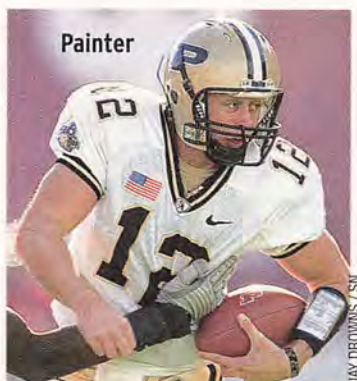
BOILERMAKERS

SN projection 6th, 7-5, Alamo Bowl **National rank** 40

Let's get tough. That's the mantra for a program that too often got pushed around last year. Sure, Joe Tiller righted a listing ship by getting Purdue back to a bowl. But 2006 left most in West Lafayette dissatisfied. So, the question persists: Is this program declining? This year will decide. A veteran squad faces a big problem: Ohio State and Michigan are back on the schedule. Still, expect a bowl—but not a sexy destination.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Purdue uses a classic three-wide, spread scheme that's heavy on the pass. It hopes to toughen the running game by incorporating a fullback at times.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL This should be one of the Big Ten's best attacks. The key: Quarterback Curtis Painter must become a better decision-maker as a passer and runner. He led the Big Ten in passing yards last season, but he also topped the nation in intercep-



Painter

tions (19). These look like the best receivers in the Big Ten. Fleet Dorien Bryant is capable of scoring anytime he touches the ball, and tight end Dustin Keller is an athletic wonder who just needs to stay healthy. What the 1-2 running punch of Kory Sheets and Jaycen Taylor lacks in size it compensates for with speed. A veteran line disappointed last year. Massive guard Jordan Grimes must set the tone.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY It's a standard 4-3 that eschews size for swarming speed. Coordinator Brock Spack picks his spots to blitz and stunt. Now that experience abounds, expect Spack to expand his packages and not be reluctant to attack.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL It's this simple: The line has to stop getting trampled against the run. If it doesn't reverse the trend, improvement by the back seven will be moot. The pressure is on the tackles to get bigger, stronger and better. Spack thinks Cliff Avril is Purdue's next great end. But who will play opposite him? There's a nice mix of veterans and

Quick hits

Stadium: Ross-Ade (grass, 62,500). **Site:** West Lafayette, Ind.
Coach: Joe Tiller (75-49, 10 years; 114-79-1 overall, 16 years)
Offensive coordinators: Bill Legg (2nd year, 5th at school); Ed Zaunbrecher (2nd year, 5th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Brock Spack (11th year, 15th at school)

Last league title won: 2000 (tie). **Last year not in a bowl:** 2005.

2006 record: 8-6, 5-3/T4th Big Ten

Champs Sports Bowl: Lost to Maryland, 24-7

Returning leaders: Rushing—Kory Sheets (158 att., 780 yards, 11 TDs).

Passing—Curtis Painter (315-530-19, 3,985 yards, 22 TDs). Receiving—Dorien Bryant (87 rec., 1,068 yards, 6 TDs).

youth at linebacker, but depth is a big issue. More help up front is a key to that progress. If experience is the best teacher, then last year's secondary should be improved after getting shredded. The corners look promising, especially Royce Adams. That means the safeties hold the key to the unit's success.

SPECIAL TEAMS Punter Jared Armstrong lived up to his junior college All-American billing. Kicker Chris Summers

has the accuracy of a shotgun—he will have to fight for his job—but Tiller loves his leg. Adams showed he may be a playmaker as a punt returner. Bryant juices up kickoff returns.

COACHING STAFF For the first time since taking the job in 1997, Tiller had no staff changes. The continuity has to help. Spack is obsessed with proving he still has it after watching his defense melt before his eyes the past two years. Don't bet against him.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	1	Selwyn Lymon (6-4, 215, Jr.)
	88	Jake Standeford (6-2, 195, Sr.)
WR	9	Dorien Bryant (5-10, 175, Sr.)
	6	Desmond Tardy (6-1, 199, Jr.)
LT	65	Garret Miller (6-8, 275, Jr.)
	73	Dan Zaleski (6-4, 295, Jr.)
LG	50	Eric Hedstrom (6-7, 303, So.)
	72	Justin Pierce (6-4, 332, Fr.)
C	68	Robbie Powell (6-5, 307, Sr.)
	78	Cory Benton (6-3, 275, Jr.)
RG	66	Jordan Grimes (6-3, 325, Sr.)
	60	Zach Smith (6-4, 293, Jr.)
RT	74	Sean Sester (6-8, 325, Jr.)
	77	Ryan Prater (6-5, 286, Fr.)
TE	28	Dustin Keller (6-4, 240, Sr.)
	85	Kyle Adams (6-5, 251, So.)
WR	21	Greg Orton (6-4, 199, Jr.)
	83	Joe Whitset (6-2, 206, Sr.)
QB	12	Curtis Painter (6-4, 223, Jr.)
	14	Joey Elliott (6-3, 211, So.)
RB	33	Jaycen Taylor (5-10, 196, Jr.)
	24	Kory Sheets (6-0, 196, Jr.)
K	13	Chris Summers (6-1, 174, So.)
KR	9	Dorien Bryant (5-10, 175, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	32	Cliff Avril (6-3, 247, Sr.)
	45	Eugene Bright (6-4, 254, Sr.)
T	92	Mike Neal (6-4, 293, So.)
	79	Jermaine Gwynn (6-1, 288, Jr.)
T	71	Alex Magee (6-5, 295, Jr.)
	90	Ryan Baker (6-5, 288, Jr.)
E	87	Mike McDonald (6-2, 250, Sr.)
	95	Keyon Brown (6-3, 241, So.)
WLB	59	Stanford Kegl (6-2, 247, Sr.)
	39	John Humphrey (6-1, 223, Fr.)
MLB	36	Dan Bick (6-1, 225, Sr.)
	17	Josh Ferguson (6-3, 242, Sr.)
SLB	42	Anthony Heygood (6-2, 230, Jr.)
	47	Mike Durrett (6-0, 225, Sr.)
CB	10	Royce Adams (6-0, 183, So.)
	35	David Pender (6-1, 172, So.)
FS	20	Brandon Erwin (6-2, 188, So.)
	7	Brandon King (5-11, 192, So.)
SS	23	Justin Scott (6-0, 209, Sr.)
	2	Torri Williams (6-2, 217, Jr.)
CB	34	Terrell Vinson (5-9, 174, Sr.)
	26	Aaron Lane (5-8, 174, Sr.)
P	11	Jared Armstrong (6-3, 234, Sr.)
PR	10	Royce Adams (6-0, 183, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at Toledo	
9-8	Eastern Illinois	
9-15	Central Michigan	
9-22	at Minnesota	27-21
9-29	▲ Notre Dame	21-35
10-6	Ohio State	
10-13	■ at Michigan	
10-20	● Iowa	17-47
10-27	Northwestern	31-10
11-3	at Penn State	0-12
11-10	Michigan State	17-15
11-17	at Indiana	28-19

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 3rd



1 OT Garret Miller. Time and again, he has been lauded for his potential. And time and again, Miller has been hurt. Now, he finds himself holding down the key left tackle spot in a pass-happy attack.

2 OLB Anthony Heygood. After moving from running back last season, Heygood will be counted on to play a key role on a unit that has struggled in recent seasons. The coaches like his speed and instincts.



MINNESOTA

GOLDEN GOPHERS

SN projection **7th, 7-5, Motor City Bowl** National rank **51**

New coach Tim Brewster is here for one reason: to take Minnesota to the next level, something Glen Mason couldn't do. But the Gophers will have to settle for another middling bowl as Brewster infuses his schemes, attitude and will on a program that will benefit from his recruiting magic in future years.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Sage coordinator Mike Dunbar is installing a one-back, spread scheme similar to the one he fashioned at Northwestern before he bolted for Cal last year. Just because it's a spread, don't expect this to be a pass-happy attack. Balance is the goal.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	1	Ernie Wheelwright (6-5, 215, Sr.)
	87	Michael Kasten (6-2, 195, Jr.)
LT	76	Dominic Alford (6-3, 305, Fr.)
	73	Jason Meinke (6-5, 255, So.)
LG	74	Ryan Ruckdashel (6-5, 275, So.)
	52	Josh Tow-Arnett (6-2, 275, So.)
C	77	Tony Brinkhaus (6-3, 295, Sr.)
	53	D.J. Burris (6-2, 280, Fr.)
RG	66	Nedward Tavale (6-2, 305, So.)
	69	John Jakel (6-5, 300, Sr.)
RT	64	Steve Shidell (6-5, 290, Sr.)
	79	Matt DeGeest (6-5, 275, Jr.)
TE	80	Jack Simmons (6-4, 240, Jr.)
	86	Troy Reilly (6-6, 250, So.)
WR	7	Eric Decker (6-2, 210, So.)
	16	Marvin Jones (5-4, 160, Fr.)
WR	82	Marc Cheatham (6-2, 210, Jr.)
	13	Michael McKelton (5-10, 180, So.)
QB	17	Tony Mortensen (6-3, 230, Jr.)
	8	Adam Weber (6-3, 210, Fr.)
RB	29	Amir Pinnix (6-0, 205, Sr.)
	25	Jay Thomas (6-0, 195, So.)
K	31	Jason Giannini (5-9, 185, Jr.)
KR	2	Dominic Jones (5-8, 190, Jr.)

SN All-conference

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Quarterback needs to be sorted out. Tony Mortensen and Adam Weber battled in the spring, but neither stood out. Dunbar likes Weber, who lacks Mortensen's experience but is a better athlete. Clint Brewster, the coach's son, is a wild card who enters the fray in August. Receiver is a big problem. There seems to be only three or four worthy options, and they all lack

Pinnix

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	91	Willie VanDeSteege (6-4, 255, Jr.)
	90	Raymond Henderson (6-6, 255, So.)
T	51	Eric Small (6-2, 265, Jr.)
	98	Neel Allen (6-3, 285, Sr.)
T	70	Todd Meisel (6-4, 275, Sr.)
	75	Otis Hudson (6-5, 310, So.)
E	94	Willie Dyson (6-3, 230, So.)
	6	Alex Daniels (6-3, 255, Jr.)
SLB	92	Steve Davis (6-2, 235, Jr.)
	44	Deon Hightower (6-3, 210, Jr.)
MLB	58	Mike Sherels (6-0, 240, Sr.)
	32	Nathan Triplett (6-3, 240, So.)
WLB	46	John Shevlin (6-1, 255, Sr.)
	28	Kevin Mannion (6-2, 210, Jr.)
CB	11	Desi Steib (6-0, 185, Sr.)
	9	Keith Massey (6-1, 195, So.)
FS	26	Duran Cooley (6-0, 205, Sr.)
	15	Jamal Harris (6-0, 185, Sr.)
SS	23	Dominique Barber (6-0, 210, Sr.)
	39	Josh Robertson (5-11, 175, Sr.)
CB	2	Dominic Jones (5-8, 190, Jr.)
	21	Daron Love (6-1, 185, Fr.)
P	41	Justin Kucek (6-0, 200, Jr.)
PR	2	Dominic Jones (5-8, 190, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome (artificial, 64,172)

Site: Minneapolis

Coach: Tim Brewster (1st year)

Offensive coordinator: Mike Dunbar (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Everett Withers (1st year)

Last league title won: 1967 (tie). Last year not in a bowl: 2001.

2006 record: 6-7, 3-5/T6th Big Ten

Insight Bowl: Lost to Texas Tech, 44-41

Returning leaders: Rushing—Amir Pinnix (252 att., 1,272 yards, 10 TDs). Passing—Tony Mortensen (2-10-2, 15 yards, 0 TDs). Receiving—Ernie Wheelwright (26 rec., 437 yards, 5 TDs).

speed. Expect incoming freshmen to leap right onto the depth chart. Amir Pinnix lacks size and speed but is a proven 1,000-yard rusher. He and

the other backs must show they can catch. The line, anchored by center Tony Brinkhaus, looks solid but must adapt to the new offense.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Talented coordinator Everett Withers will play a 4-3 scheme that features a variety of pressure packages backed by press coverage. It's all about making big plays—or giving them up.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL This unit usually lacks star power, and that again is the case. The line could be a strength but must get tougher against the run. Keep an eye on end Alex Daniels, a converted linebacker/running back who could be special. John Shevlin and Mike Sherels are the bellwethers of a workmanlike crew of linebackers. An undersized end last year, Steve Davis has been converted to outside linebacker and could become a handful. The secondary remains a work in progress. Cornerback Dominic Jones, a former safety, looks like a special player.

SPECIAL TEAMS Brewster isn't thrilled with his veteran kicking options. Punter Justin Kucek has been told he needs to improve. The staff will turn to newcomers to juice up the return game. Harold Howell could be a difference-maker.

COACHING STAFF Brewster has energized a moribund program and is hell-bent on winning a Big Ten title. He never has been a coordinator or head coach but is a recruiting machine who has groomed

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Bowling Green	
9-8	Miami (Ohio)	
9-15	vs. Fla. Atlantic*	
9-22	● Purdue	21-27
9-29	▲ Ohio State	0-44
10-6	at Indiana	63-26
10-13	at Northwestern	
10-20	North Dakota State	10-9
10-27	■ at Michigan	14-28
11-3	Illinois	
11-10	at Iowa	34-24
11-17	Wisconsin	12-48

*at Miami

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 8th

himself for the job by working for the likes of Mack Brown, Marty Schottenheimer and Mike Shanahan. Brewster's staff shares his passion for wooing talent and is adept at X's and O's. If the coaches increase the talent as promised, this will be a program on the rise.



1 QB Adam Weber. For the new spread attack to work, a competent trigger-man must be found. Don't be shocked to see Weber emerge. He lacks experience, but his athletic skills fit the offense.

2 DE Alex Daniels. A linebacker and running back last year, his size and speed could make him a terror off the edge. Daniels could combine with Willie VanDeSteege to provide a potent pass rush.

FIGHTING ILLINI

SN projection **8th, 6-6, Insight Bowl** National rank **57**

Winning recruiting battles is great, but it's time for Illinois to deliver on the field. And what better time than now for a program that seems to have momentum. Year 1 under Ron Zook was filled with blowout losses. Year 2 was marked by close defeats. Year 3, Zook hopes, will bring close wins—and a bowl. If that doesn't happen, the pressure will be on.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Mike Locksley is a rising star with a multi-dimensional scheme designed to maximize the athleticism of quarterback Juice Williams. The goal this year: Develop a passing game.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Anyone who saw Williams last season knows he is a raw passer. Locksley thinks Williams is getting better. He's learning he doesn't have to throw every pass 100 mph. And he showed better patience in the pocket this spring. When Williams wants to throw, he'll search out Arrelious

Rashard Mendenhall



PAUL NISELY / SN

Benn, the centerpiece of another star-studded recruiting haul. Benn is big, fast and confident, a ready-made star. Illinois needs him to stretch defenses and create room for an otherwise pedestrian group of receivers. The staff is excited about its tight ends and vows to use them, especially Jeff Cumberland. With Pierre Thomas and E.B. Halsey gone, the running game belongs to Rashard Mendenhall, who seems poised for a 1,000-yard season. But the Williams-Benn-Mendenhall dynamic will struggle if the line doesn't improve. Pass blocking was abysmal last year, and four of five starters are back, led by tackle Akim Millington.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Vince Okruch is the coordinator, but Zook's fingerprints are all over this unit. The Illini run a 4-3 set that may not have to rely on "junk" schemes now that the talent level is improving.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The front seven has a chance to be salty. End Derek Walker should become a top pass rusher. And there are multiple options at

Quick hits

Stadium: Memorial (artificial, 69,249). **Site:** Champaign, Ill.
Coach: Ron Zook (4-19, 2 years; 27-33 overall, 5 years)
Offensive coordinator: Mike Locksley (3rd year)
Defensive coordinator: Vince Okruch (2nd year)

Last league title won: 2001. **Last bowl appearance:** 2001.

2006 record: 2-10, 1-7/T10th Big Ten

Returning leaders: Rushing—Rashard Mendenhall (78 att., 640 yards, 5 TDs). Passing—Juice Williams (103-261-9, 1,489 yards, 9 TDs). Receiving—Kyle Hudson (30 rec., 403 yards, 3 TDs).

tackle, including Chris Norwell and two star recruits. J Leman is the best linebacker you've never heard of. Keep an eye on freshman Martez Wilson, who will be difficult to keep off the field. There's no lack of options at safety, and Vontae Davis is a future star who leads a promising group of cornerbacks.

SPECIAL TEAMS This is a Zook specialty, but there's little to smile about aside from kicker Jason Reda, who's steady. Punter Kyle Yelton struggled last season and is fighting for

his job. The infusion of speedy, young talent should improve the return and coverage units.

COACHING STAFF The label will dog Zook until he wins big: great recruiter/iffy coach. But he has things headed in the right direction and appears poised for a breakout. He has built a solid staff that excels at recruiting. Locksley is a good playcaller who soon will be a head coach. Eric Wolford was hired from Arizona to coach the offensive line after Ed Warinner left to be offensive coordinator at Kansas.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	21	Kyle Hudson (5-11, 165, Jr.)
	82	Frank Lenti (6-2, 185, Sr.)
LT	69	Akim Millington (6-6, 310, Sr.)
	68	Xavier Fulton (6-5, 265, Jr.)
LG	64	Martin O'Donnell (6-5, 300, Sr.)
	66	Randall Hunt (6-6, 295, Fr.)
C	60	Ryan McDonald (6-5, 300, Jr.)
	72	Ben Amundsen (6-5, 310, Sr.)
RG	52	Jon Asamoah (6-5, 265, So.)
	74	Brandon Jordan (6-5, 290, Fr.)
RT	76	Charles Myles (6-6, 320, Sr.)
	78	Ryan Palmer (6-7, 315, Fr.)
TE	17	Jeff Cumberland (6-5, 240, So.)
	16	Michael Hoomanawanui (6-5, 255, So.)
WR	6	Chris James (6-0, 177, So.)
	9	Arrelious Benn* (6-2, 210, Fr.)
QB	7	Juice Williams (6-2, 220, So.)
	10	Eddie McGee (6-4, 189, Fr.)
RB	5	Rashard Mendenhall (5-11, 210, Jr.)
	34	Walter Mendenhall (6-0, 225, Jr.)
WR	8	Daluan Warren (6-2, 210, Sr.)
	11	Joe Morgan (6-2, 180, So.)
K	13	Jason Reda (6-1, 200, Sr.)
KR	15	Chris Duvalt (5-11, 170, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	91	Derek Walker (6-4, 270, Jr.)
	81	Will Davis (6-3, 235, Jr.)
T	96	Chris Norwell (6-6, 290, Sr.)
	56	Sirod Williams (6-0, 270, Jr.)
T	94	David Lindquist (6-3, 280, Jr.)
	76	Mike Ware (6-3, 285, Sr.)
E	95	Doug Pilcher (6-5, 260, So.)
	90	Antonio James (6-5, 265, So.)
SLB	44	Brit Miller (6-1, 245, Jr.)
	45	Rodney Pittman (6-2, 235, Jr.)
MLB	47	J Leman (6-2, 240, Sr.)
	43	Sam Carson (6-1, 245, Jr.)
WLB	40	Antonio Steele (6-2, 210, Sr.)
	51	Anthony Thornhill (6-1, 220, Sr.)
CB	31	Travon Bellamy (6-0, 195, So.)
	15	Chris Duvalt (5-11, 170, So.)
FS	42	Kevin Mitchell (6-0, 200, Sr.)
	25	Justin Sanders (6-1, 205, Sr.)
SS	32	Justin Harrison (5-11, 205, Sr.)
	24	Bo Flowers* (6-2, 225, Fr.)
CB	1	Vontae Davis (6-0, 185, So.)
	27	Antonio Gully (6-1, 180, Fr.)
P	37	Kyle Yelton (6-0, 185, So.)
PR	13	Will Judson (5-8, 155, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	▲ vs. Missouri*	
9-8	Western Illinois	
9-15	● at Syracuse	21-31
9-22	at Indiana	32-34
9-29	Penn State	12-26
10-6	Wisconsin	24-30
10-13	at Iowa	7-24
10-20	Michigan	
10-27	Ball State	
11-3	at Minnesota	
11-10	■ at Ohio State	10-17
11-17	Northwestern	16-27

*at St. Louis

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 4th

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 WR Arrelious Benn. This true freshman, a freakish combination of size and speed, arrived in time to go through spring drills. Good thing, because this offense is desperate to develop a downfield passing game.

2 LB Martez Wilson. Another mega-recruit, Wilson was a prep end who will be groomed as the next Simeon Rice. At the least, Wilson will be a third-down pass rusher because of his quick first step and athleticism.

5 MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS

SN projection **9th, 5-7**

National rank **71**

Quick hits

Stadium: Spartan (grass, 75,005). **Site:** East Lansing, Mich.
Coach: Mark Dantonio (1st year, 7th at school)
Offensive coordinator: Don Treadwell (1st year, 4th at school)
Defensive coordinator: Pat Narduzzi (1st year)

Last league title won: 1990 (tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 2003.

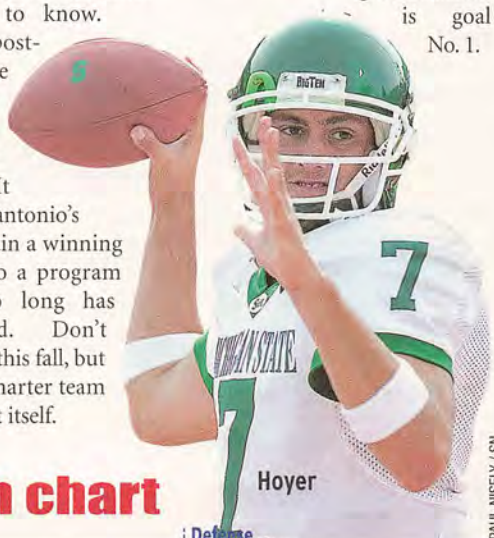
2006 record: 4-8, 1-7/T10th Big Ten

Returning leaders: Rushing—Javon Ringer (86 att., 497 yards, 1 TD).
 Passing—Brian Hoyer (82-144-3, 863 yards, 4 TDs). Receiving—T.J. Williams
 (25 rec., 281 yards, 3 TDs).

After every winter workout and every spring practice, grades were handed out. Did players give a championship effort? That's what new coach Mark Dantonio wanted to know.

Grades were posted so everyone could see who was buying in and who wasn't. It was part of Dantonio's effort to ingrain a winning mentality into a program that for too long has underachieved. Don't expect a bowl this fall, but do expect a smarter team that won't beat itself.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Toughness is in, finesse is out in a pro-style attack that also needs to be multiple and balanced. Make no mistake: Establishing a power ground assault is goal No. 1.



PAUL NISELY / SN

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	84	Deon Curry (6-1, 199, Jr.)
	12	T.J. Williams (6-3, 184, So.)
LT	66	Mike Gyetvai (6-7, 307, Sr.)
	57	Rocco Cironi (6-6, 300, So.)
LG	75	Pete Clifford (6-7, 316, Sr.)
	71	Kenny Shane (6-5, 325, Sr.)
C	54	John Masters (6-4, 285, Sr.)
	65	Joel Nitchman (6-3, 295, So.)
RG	73	Roland Martin (6-5, 325, Jr.)
	60	Mike Bacon (6-4, 299, Jr.)
RT	79	Jesse Miller (6-6, 307, Jr.)
	64	Brendon Moss (6-6, 295, So.)
TE	80	Kellen Davis (6-6, 254, Sr.)
	48	Eric Andon (6-4, 246, Sr.)
WR	18	Terry Love (5-11, 173, Sr.)
	10	Devin Thomas (6-2, 214, Jr.)
QB	7	Brian Hoyer (6-2, 212, Jr.)
	10	Connor Dixon (6-4, 191, Fr.)
RB	23	Javon Ringer (5-9, 202, Jr.)
	30	Jehuu Caulcrick (6-0, 255, Sr.)
FB	49	Dwayne Holmes (6-0, 275, Jr.)
	35	Jeff McPherson (6-1, 240, Jr.)
K	14	Brett Swenson (5-8, 160, So.)
KR	10	Devin Thomas (6-2, 214, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	47	Brandon Long (6-4, 245, Jr.)
	94	Jonal Saint-Dic (6-1, 250, Sr.)
T	97	Justin Kershaw (6-4, 260, Jr.)
	98	Bobby Jones (6-4, 288, Sr.)
NT	99	Ogemdi Nwagbue (6-4, 290, Sr.)
	88	John Stipek (6-5, 276, So.)
E	51	Ervin Baldwin (6-2, 270, Sr.)
	58	Reggie Graham (6-4, 223, So.)
SLB	45	Andrew Hawken (6-2, 235, So.)
	36	Jon Misch (6-2, 200, Fr.)
MLB	41	Kaleb Thornhill (6-1, 240, Sr.)
	44	Josh Rouse (6-3, 230, So.)
WLB	27	SirDarean Adams (6-0, 230, Sr.)
	43	Eric Gordon (6-0, 225, Fr.)
CB	38	Kendell Davis-Clark (5-11, 199, Jr.)
	31	Ashton Henderson (5-11, 183, So.)
FS	21	Otis Wiley (6-2, 210, Jr.)
	33	Dan Fortener (6-1, 190, So.)
SS	3	Nehemiah Warrick (6-1, 200, Sr.)
	13	Travis Key (5-10, 185, Sr.)
CB	37	Ross Weaver (6-1, 202, So.)
	22	Enrique Shaw (6-1, 185, Fr.)
P	18	Aaron Bates* (6-0, 190, Fr.)
PR	18	Terry Love (5-11, 173, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Top runner Javon Ringer, a difference-maker, sustained two knee injuries over the past three years. Is he OK? Burly Jehuu Caulcrick is a move-the-chains complement, and everyone is excited about blazing A.J. Jimmerson. Michigan State hasn't used a fullback since 2002, but this attack needs one, and former tight end Dwayne Holmes looks like a good one. The success of the offense will depend on quarterback Brian Hoyer, who has impressed coaches so far with his arm and leadership but must improve his decision-making. He also must adapt to dropping back after working mostly from the shotgun in the previous offense. There's no shortage of quality targets, topped by Devin Thomas and T.J. Williams. The line is a work in progress. Plus, it is being asked to ditch an upright pass-blocking posture to develop a run-blocking edge.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Dantonio is defensive-minded and preaches assignment-oriented football from a 4-3 base. He doesn't like to gamble but has ample pressure schemes available if needed.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Led by Kaleb Thornhill, the linebackers could be a strength. It's key that linebacker SirDarean Adams makes the transition from hybrid linebacker/safety. Line play has been substandard for several years. The depth at tackle is troublesome. And a nonexistent pass rush has only

exacerbated problems for a maligned secondary, which must adapt to playing more press-zone coverage after working primarily as a soft-man scheme last year. There are several big, fast options at cornerback. Dantonio likes the experience of his safeties, led by Otis Wiley.

SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Brett Swenson lived up to his hype as a true freshman last year. He's

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	UAB	
9-8	Bowling Green	
9-15	Pitt	38-23
9-22	▲ at Notre Dame	37-40
9-29	■ at Wisconsin	
10-6	Northwestern	41-38
10-13	● Indiana	21-46
10-20	at Ohio State	7-38
10-27	at Iowa	
11-3	Michigan	13-31
11-10	at Purdue	15-17
11-17	Penn State	13-17

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 1st

special. There's no shortage of athletes to fill return roles, but there is concern about finding a punter.

COACHING STAFF For the nonsense Dantonio, it's all about discipline, accountability and attention to detail, commodities that were in short supply under the previous staff. Dantonio made his transition easier by bringing eight coaches with him from Cincinnati. The goal is simple: Make Michigan State matter.

2-POINT conversion

GET IT
 DONE
 OR ELSE

1 QB Brian Hoyer. His time finally has arrived. Too bad he has to learn a new offense. The staff has high hopes for Hoyer, a leader who can make all of the throws. But can he make the right decisions? Stay tuned.

2 CB Jeremy Ware. The transfer from South Carolina will inject needed size and speed into a much-maligned secondary. But he and other members of the defensive backfield would benefit most from a better pass rush.

INDIANA HOOSIERS

SN projection **10th, 5-7**

National rank **74**

A coach and a program are trying to get better. Terry Hooppner missed spring drills to "attend to personal health matters." This after taking a leave last year following two brain surgeries. Hooppner promises to be back in the fall. Good thing, because a soft schedule and the continued maturation of young talent have the Hoosiers primed to end the Big Ten's longest bowl drought: 13 seasons.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Savvy coordinator Bill Lynch runs a spread offense that features quick passes from a one-back, three-wide set. A more prominent role for the tight end is expected this year.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Everything begins and ends with quarterback Kellen Lewis, an electric talent who evokes comparisons to former Indiana great Antwaan Randle El—only Lewis is a better passer. The Hoosiers boast six quality wideouts. James Hardy, a big target and legitimate deep

Hardy



CHRIS BERNACCHI FOR SN

threat, is the star. At running back, Marcus Thigpen is a diminutive speedster, and Demetrius McCray provides a rugged change of pace. Ex-quarterback Blake Powers is making a seamless transition to tight end. All will be for naught, though, if the line fails. Indiana was the Big Ten's worst rushing team for the second straight year. In 2006, Hooppner signed what he called the "Seven Blocks of Limestone." Guard Pete Saxon and tackle Rodger Saffold already look special. Finding a center is key.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Size is sacrificed for speed in a 4-3. Coordinator Joe Palcic's goal: eliminate big plays. He thinks he has the athletes to play mostly base defenses, which in theory will force foes to make multiple-play drives to score.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Youth still dominates the two-deep, but the athleticism has improved. Success will hinge on the deeper and stronger line, which must control gaps.

Quick hits

Stadium: Memorial (artificial, 52,354)

Site: Bloomington, Ind.

Coach: Terry Hooppner (9-14, 2 years; 57-39 overall, 8 years)

Offensive coordinator: Bill Lynch (3rd year, 5th at school)

Defensive coordinators: Brian George (3rd year); Joe Palcic (3rd year)

Last league title won: 1967 (tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 1993.

2006 record: 5-7, 3-5/16th Big Ten

Returning leaders: Rushing—Kellen Lewis (124 att., 441 yards, 5 TDs).

Passing—Kellen Lewis (190-346-7, 2,221 yards, 14 TDs). Receiving—James Hardy (51 rec., 722 yards, 10 TDs).

Greg Brown is an anchor inside, but the Hoosiers need speedy pass rushers to stop quarterbacks from working unfettered. Palcic loves his options at linebacker. Will Patterson is a star-in-waiting, and Geno Johnson has beefed up without losing speed. The cornerback duo of Tracy Porter and Leslie Majors might be one of the league's best. Porter figures to be a first-day draft pick. It's hoped that Nick Polk, a receiver last year, stabilizes the safety situation.

SPECIAL TEAMS Thigpen may be the nation's best return man. Austin Starr has solved a troublesome kicking situation, and punter Michael Hines appears capable of turning over the field if the offense stalls.

COACHING STAFF No one knows if "Coach Hep" will be on the sideline to inject his tireless enthusiasm and sharp offensive ideas on a program that is making strides. Lynch is like another head coach, and Palcic knows how to fit personnel to his schemes.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos. No.	Name
WR 82	James Hardy (6-7, 220, Jr.)
81	Terrance Turner (6-3, 200, Fr.)
LT 76	Rodger Saffold (6-5, 280, So.)
73	James Brewer (6-8, 325, Fr.)
LG 64	Pete Saxon (6-6, 315, So.)
78	Kyle Thomas (6-4, 287, Jr.)
C 61	Ben Wyss (6-1, 280, Sr.)
71	Alex Perry (6-7, 285, Fr.)
RG 50	John Sandberg (6-2, 295, Sr.)
67	Cody Faulkner (6-5, 300, Fr.)
RT 70	Charlie Emerson (6-5, 280, Sr.)
68	Mike Stark (6-7, 282, Fr.)
TE 88	Nick Sexton (6-5, 258, Sr.)
14	Blake Powers (6-4, 236, Sr.)
WR 13	Andrew Means (6-0, 208, So.)
7	Ray Fisher (5-9, 170, So.)
WR 6	James Bailey (6-2, 205, Jr.)
19	Brandon Walker-Roby (5-11, 187, Jr.)
QB 15	Kellen Lewis (6-1, 177, So.)
4	Ben Chappell (6-3, 233, Fr.)
RB 2	Marcus Thigpen (5-9, 190, Jr.)
22	Demetrius McCray (5-11, 195, So.)
K 18	Austin Starr (6-2, 207, Jr.)
KR 2	Marcus Thigpen (5-9, 190, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos. No.	Name
E 57	Jammie Kirlow (6-3, 257, So.)
85	Brian Faires (6-3, 260, Sr.)
NT 95	Joe Kremer (6-2, 305, Sr.)
97	Keith Burrus (6-2, 308, So.)
T 62	Greg Brown (6-2, 299, Jr.)
53	Emile Bass (6-3, 293, So.)
E 98	Greg Middleton (6-3, 265, So.)
94	Fabiene Boone (6-4, 246, So.)
SLB 56	Geno Johnson (6-2, 220, Jr.)
10	Mandela Roberts (6-0, 217, So.)
MLB 51	Adam McClurg (6-0, 215, Sr.)
43	Matt Mayberry (6-2, 222, So.)
WLB 34	Will Patterson (6-1, 233, So.)
38	Justin Carrington (6-0, 212, So.)
CB 28	Leslie Majors (5-9, 168, Sr.)
16	Chris Phillips (6-0, 190, Jr.)
FS 8	Nick Polk (6-0, 205, So.)
33	Joe Kleinsmith (5-11, 190, Jr.)
SS 20	Austin Thomas (6-2, 197, So.)
24	J.T. Owens (6-0, 207, So.)
CB 9	Tracy Porter (5-11, 185, Sr.)
17	Bruce Hampton (5-10, 193, So.)
P 93	Michael Hines (5-11, 194, Sr.)
PR 9	Tracy Porter (5-11, 185, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Indiana State	
9-8	at Western Michigan	39-20
9-15	Akron	
9-22	• Illinois	34-32
9-29	at Iowa	31-28
10-6	Minnesota	26-63
10-13	at Michigan State	46-21
10-20	Penn State	
10-27	■ at Wisconsin	17-52
11-3	Ball State	24-23
11-10	at Northwestern	
11-17	▲ Purdue	19-28

■ Toughest game • Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 11th

2-POINT conversion

GET IT
DONE
OR ELSE

1 C Ben Wyss. A "program guy" who has waited his turn, Wyss steps into the most critical spot on a line that has lots to prove. If he falters, the staff will go to Alex Perry, a youngster who will be hard to keep on the bench.

2 SS Austin Thomas. He hopes to answer a pressing need. The staff will try to protect him by often lining him up in the boundary near a sideline. Thomas should be OK vs. the run, but his coverage skills are dubious.

NORTHWESTERN WILDCATS

SN projection **11th, 3-9**

National rank **87**

Last year the Wildcats took a step back. In what already was being considered a transition year, the program had to deal with the death of coach Randy Walker. Credit Pat Fitzgerald for holding things together and making progress. Now, the goal is to return to the postseason. The Wildcats will come close but won't make it this year.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

The team runs a three-wide, one-back scheme but tricks it up with the use of multiple formations and lots of motion. The aim is to con-



JAN DROWINS / SN

fuse defenses and create mismatches.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Inconsistent quarterback play—a

problem last year—won't be an issue this season if C.J. Bacher continues to mature. The offense seemed to regain its old form when Bacher started the last five games of 2006. Tyrell Sutton reprises his role as one of the Big Ten's shiftest running backs, though a backup is needed. Ross Lane and Eric Peterman lead a workmanlike group of receivers that is loaded with viable options. It's up to a veteran line to provide this underrated group of skill players room to work. Center Trevor Rees is an undersized bulldog, and tackle Dylan Thiry looms as a force on the edge.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Wildcats want to attack and aren't afraid to use zone pressure or blitz from their 4-3 alignment. Three-deep, man-free coverage is the norm, though. Northwestern also mixes in some 3-4 looks, and Fitzgerald eventually wants to make the 3-4 the team's base set.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The line—particularly at end—might be the strongest part of the defense. There's reason to be excited about Corey Wootton, a huge end who is primed to break out. Adam Hahn and John Gill are legit Big Ten tacklers, but depth is needed. If the big boys play to their potential, life will be easier for a developing group of linebackers. Adam Kadela is a warrior, but speedy youngsters such as Eddie Simpson, Prince Kwa-

teng and Mike Dinard must emerge as playmakers. The secondary could be a strength if depth emerges. Cornerback Deante Battle usually covers the opponent's top wideout. Strong safety Brendan Smith mixes brains with big hits.

SPECIAL TEAMS The search for a kicker and punter continues. Three players are competing, but Stefan Demos could win

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Northeastern	
9-8	Nevada	21-31
9-15	Duke	
9-22	■ at Ohio State	10-54
9-29	Michigan	3-17
10-6	at Michigan State	38-41
10-13	Minnesota	
10-19	vs. Eastern Michigan*	14-6
10-27	at Purdue	10-31
11-3	▲ Iowa	21-7
11-10	● Indiana	
11-17	at Illinois	27-16

*Friday, at Detroit

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big Ten schedule strength: 9th

both jobs. Sherrick McManis gives the Wildcats a game-breaking kickoff returner, and the staff likes Smith's ball skills on punt returns.

COACHING STAFF Fitzgerald, who exudes quiet confidence, is the youngest coach in the nation. Sometimes, it shows, but he's learning and smartly leans on his assistants, all of whom are back. The continuity will help a developing team.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	9	Ross Lane (6-3, 190, Jr.)
	87	Tonjua Jones (6-2, 185, Sr.)
LT	74	Dylan Thiry (6-8, 315, Sr.)
	66	Mike Boyle (6-7, 275, Fr.)
LG	77	Adam Crum (6-1, 300, Sr.)
	76	Desmond Taylor (6-3, 285, So.)
C	50	Trevor Rees (6-2, 280, Sr.)
	77	Adam Crum (6-1, 285, Sr.)
RG	52	Joel Belding (6-3, 300, Jr.)
	63	Keegan Grant (6-2, 295, Fr.)
RT	78	Kurt Mattes (6-6, 290, So.)
	60	Ramon Diaz (6-4, 295, So.)
Super	44	Mark Woodsum (6-0, 240, So.)
	80	Brendan Mitchell (6-3, 250, So.)
WR	12	Andrew Brewer (6-3, 210, So.)
	7	Jeff Yarbrough (5-11, 180, Jr.)
WR	10	Eric Peterman (6-1, 200, Jr.)
	88	Carl Fisher (6-0, 200, Fr.)
QB	18	C.J. Bacher (6-2, 200, Jr.)
	13	Mike Kafka (6-3, 220, So.)
RB	19	Tyrell Sutton (5-9, 190, Jr.)
	11	Brandon Roberson (5-9, 200, Sr.)
K	1	Stefan Demos (5-10, 190, Fr.)
KR	24	Sherrick McManis (6-0, 180, So.)

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	91	Mark Koehn (6-3, 265, Sr.)
	72	David Ngene (6-3, 260, Sr.)
T	79	Adam Hahn (6-4, 295, So.)
	92	Keegan Kennedy (6-2, 285, Jr.)
T	70	John Gill (6-3, 290, Jr.)
	67	Marshall Thomas (6-3, 265, So.)
E	99	Corey Wootton (6-7, 275, So.)
	95	Kevin Mims (6-3, 270, Jr.)
SLB	40	Eddie Simpson (6-1, 230, Sr.)
	36	Prince Kwateng (6-2, 235, Jr.)
MLB	43	Adam Kadela (6-3, 240, Sr.)
	46	Malcolm Arrington (6-2, 235, Jr.)
WLB	31	Mike Dinard (6-2, 235, Jr.)
	54	Chris Malleo (6-2, 235, Sr.)
CB	22	Deante Battle (5-10, 180, Sr.)
	28	Justin Vaughn (6-0, 180, Fr.)
FS	27	Reggie McPherson (6-1, 200, Sr.)
	45	Ben Rothrauff (5-10, 195, Sr.)
SS	39	Brendan Smith (6-0, 210, Jr.)
	17	Brad Phillips (6-4, 210, So.)
CB	24	Sherrick McManis (6-0, 180, So.)
	16	David Oredugba (6-2, 195, Jr.)
P	97	Kyle Daley (6-0, 190, Jr.)
PR	39	Brendan Smith (6-0, 210, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

SN All-conference

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 **SB Mark Woodsum.** The coaches have created a Superback position, which is a hybrid of the tight end and fullback jobs. He often will line up in the slot and look to create mismatches with defensive backs.

2 **CB Sherrick McManis** A revelation as a true freshman last season, McManis lacks size but has legitimate speed. As his strength and confidence increase, he could become a special player.

CONFERENCE RANK **3**

BIG 12

Projected finish

NORTH

- 1 
- 2 
- 3 
- 4 
- 5 
- 6 

SOUTH

- 1 
- 2 
- 3 
- 4 
- 5 
- 6 

ASCENDING ^

Oklahoma State. The Cowboys' stock is on the rise, thanks to stadium renovations and jaw-dropping skill position personnel. Coach Mike Gundy's team was one of two last season to average more than 200 yards a game passing and rushing. If the Cowboys play defense, they could make the Big 12 South race very interesting.

DESCENDING v

Texas A&M. The momentum the Aggies gained from their stunning upset of Texas last season was lost in their dismal Holiday Bowl effort against Cal. A rugged schedule, the inability to close out games and the lack of a potent passing attack could relegate A&M to second-division status in the Big 12 and cost Dennis Franchione his job.

This North-South battle is not a civil war

The South Division has been so dominant in the 11-year history of the Big 12 that the North Division generally has been nothing more than window dressing for its better half.

The South has won the league title three straight years and four of the last five. It won 14 of 19 games against the North last year. The South produced national champions in 2000 (Oklahoma) and 2005 (Texas), the North none. South teams have played for the BCS national title four times, the North once—Nebraska in 2001. Texas, Oklahoma and Texas A&M have played in eight BCS bowl games, seven by the Longhorns and Sooners. Nebraska (2) and Kansas State (1) have played in the only three for the North.

Texas, Oklahoma State, Texas Tech and Texas A&M return star quarterbacks, and Longhorns sophomore Colt McCoy could be a Heisman candidate. In the North, Missouri's Chase Daniel is terrific, but other quarterbacks have either regressed or fallen short of expectations.

The best

coaches in the league? That list would start with

Texas' Mack Brown and Oklahoma's Bob Stoops and include Texas Tech's Mike Leach, Oklahoma State rising star Mike Gundy and A&M's Dennis Franchione.

Look for the top runners at Texas A&M, Oklahoma, Texas and Oklahoma State. Nebraska's best runner, Brandon Jackson, left early for the NFL, and Kansas must replace Big 12 leading rusher Jon Cornish.

Marquee receivers? Texas, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State. Need we go on?

If the North doesn't pick it up, the league might trade it for half the WAC or Conference USA.



ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

McCoy leads a group of talented QBs in the South division.



Honor roll

Best pregame atmosphere: Texas A&M
Best home-field advantage: Nebraska
Best stadium: Kyle Field, Texas A&M
Best fans: Nebraska
Best mascot: Bevo, Texas
Strongest arm: Josh Freeman, Kansas State
Most dangerous scrambler: Bobby Reid, Oklahoma State
Fastest running back: Jamaal Charles, Texas
Most physical receiver: Adarius Bowman, Oklahoma State
Surest hands: Malcolm Kelly, Oklahoma
Most dominant O-lineman: Cody Wallace, Texas A&M
Most disruptive end: Chris Harrington, Texas A&M
Best run-stuffing tackle: Derek Lokey, Texas
Hardest-hitting linebacker: Curtis Lofton, Oklahoma
Best cover man: Reggie Smith, Oklahoma
Top NFL prospect: Adarius Bowman, Oklahoma State

ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

Coming back from injuries

Roddrick Muckelroy, LB, Texas. He probably was the team's best linebacker before being sidelined early last season with ruptured ligaments in his ring finger. He's a do-it-all type—strong enough to shed blockers, fast enough to cover receivers.

Marcus Watts, FS, Kansas State. A broken hand late in the 2006 season sidelined this high-energy senior, who makes plays all over the field.

Ryan Reynolds, LB, Oklahoma. Torn knee ligaments sidelined this rising star in 2006, but now he can claim one of two linebacker openings. He's physical and strong.

Zackary Bowman, CB, Nebraska. Two serious knee injuries have sidetracked Bowman, who has great size and cover skills. He will try to return by October.

Time to get it done

Sam Keller, QB, Nebraska. He has an NFL arm and starting experience, courtesy of his pre-transfer career at Arizona State. Oklahoma coveted this guy, and now he needs to show why by providing a smooth transition from efficient Zac Taylor.

Sam Bradford, QB, Oklahoma. This redshirt freshman is the best bet to line up under center for a potential Top 10 team that needs only a smart, capable caretaker to key a title run.

Sergio Kindie, LB, Texas. The team's most heralded defensive recruit since Derrick Johnson needs to get on the field and produce. He's an impressive physical specimen.

Michael Crabtree, WR, Texas Tech. With the loss of his top three receivers, Graham Harrell will need a primary target, and this redshirt freshman, the prize recruit of 2006, fits the bill.

Jeremy Broadway, WR, Oklahoma State. The sophomore was turning heads—and short catches into big gains—last fall before being lost with a wrist injury. He's the top candidate to fill the shoes of D'Juan Woods opposite Adarius Bowman.



Bradford

OU MEDIA RELATIONS

All-conference

FIRST TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Limas Sweed, Texas (6-5, 219, Sr.)
WR	Adarius Bowman, Oklahoma State (6-4, 220, Sr.)
TE	Martellus Bennett, Texas A&M (6-7, 253, Jr.)
T	David Koenig, Oklahoma State (6-5, 290, Sr.)
T	Tony Hills, Texas (6-6, 305, Sr.)
G	George Robinson, Oklahoma (6-5, 330, Jr.)
G	Matt Slauson, Nebraska (6-5, 335, Jr.)
C	Cody Wallace, Texas A&M (6-4, 294, Sr.)
QB	Colt McCoy, Texas (6-3, 205, So.)
RB	Allen Patrick, Oklahoma (6-0, 191, Sr.)
RB	Mike Goodson, Texas A&M (6-0, 192, So.)

Defense

E	Brian Orakpo, Texas (6-4, 248, Jr.)
E	Chris Harrington, Texas A&M (6-5, 267, Sr.)
T	Derek Lokey, Texas (6-2, 280, Sr.)
T	Frank Okam, Texas (6-5, 320, Sr.)
LB	Bo Ruud, Nebraska (6-3, 235, Sr.)
LB	Alvin Bowen, Iowa State (6-2, 216, Sr.)
LB	Ian Campbell, Kansas State (6-5, 232, Jr.)
CB	Aqib Talib, Kansas (6-2, 195, Jr.)
CB	Reggie Smith, Oklahoma (6-1, 197, Jr.)
S	Ryan Walters, Colorado (5-11, 200, Jr.)
S	Marcus Watts, Kansas State (6-1, 191, Sr.)

Specialists

K	Garrett Hartley, Oklahoma (5-9, 198, Sr.)
P	Matt Fodge, Oklahoma State (6-1, 195, Jr.)
KR	Reggie Smith, Oklahoma (6-1, 197, Jr.)

SN All-American

Players of the year

Offense: Colt McCoy, QB, Texas
Defense: Reggie Smith, CB, Oklahoma

SECOND TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Maurice Purify, Nebraska (6-4, 220, Sr.)
WR	Malcolm Kelly, Oklahoma (6-4, 217, Jr.)
TE	Martin Rucker, Missouri (6-5, 255, Sr.)
T	Anthony Collins, Kansas (6-6, 320, Jr.)
T	Jason Smith, Baylor (6-5, 288, Jr.)
G	Louis Vasquez, Texas Tech (6-6, 351, Jr.)
G	Kirk Elder, Texas A&M (6-5, 298, Sr.)
C	Jon Cooper, Oklahoma (6-2, 285, Jr.)
QB	Chase Daniel, Missouri (6-0, 225, Jr.)
RB	Jamaal Charles, Texas (6-1, 200, Jr.)
RB	Jorvorskie Lane, Texas A&M (6-0, 263, Jr.)

Defense

E	Nathan Peterson, Oklahoma State (6-2, 240, Sr.)
E	Jake Ratliff, Texas Tech (6-6, 238, Jr.)
T	Ndamukong Suh, Nebraska (6-4, 305, So.)
T	Red Bryant, Texas A&M (6-5, 324, Sr.)
LB	Roddrick Muckelroy, Texas (6-2, 230, So.)
LB	Joe Pawelek, Baylor (6-2, 231, So.)
LB	Jordon Dizon, Colorado (6-0, 225, Sr.)
CB	Marcus Walker, Oklahoma (5-11, 192, Sr.)
CB	Terrence Wheatley, Colorado (5-10, 175, Sr.)
S	Andre Sexton, Oklahoma State (6-1, 210, So.)
S	Dwain Crawford, Baylor (6-0, 208, Jr.)

Specialists

K	Jeff Wolfert, Missouri (6-2, 185, Jr.)
P	Matt DiLallo, Colorado (6-1, 205, So.)
KR	Quan Cosby, Texas (5-11, 200, Jr.)

Newcomers of the year

Offense: Sam Keller, QB, Nebraska
Defense: Chykie Brown, CB, Texas

Newcomers to watch

Chykie Brown, CB, Texas. He's a pure athlete with a great burst. Brown, a redshirt, wasn't thrown into the fire like fellow freshman Deon Beasley last fall and made his presence felt in the spring.

Mike Reed, LB, Oklahoma. This junior college stud faces the unen-

viable expectations of filling Rufus Alexander's shoes. He had better get in shape quickly and adjust to the faster-paced game.

P.T. Gates, RB, Colorado. Coach Dan Hawkins already has labeled this 5-11, 190-pound junior college transfer a Reggie Bush-type

player. The Buffaloes like his smarts and plan to get him ready in the fall.

Phil Loadholt, OT, Oklahoma. This human solar eclipse doubles as an offensive lineman at 360 pounds spread over a 6-8 frame. Loadholt, a junior college All-American who

enrolled for the spring semester, got a leg up on his competition by learning the system.

Larry Asante, SS, Nebraska. He's a junior college transfer who packs a punch. Asante should give the Huskers' defense the physical presence it was lacking last season.

ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES



Gotta-see games

> Oklahoma State at Georgia, Sept. 1

The Bulldogs, the first of eight 2006 bowl opponents on the Cowboys' schedule, could tell us whether this OSU offensive machine is a clunker.

> Miami at Oklahoma, Sept. 8

As the Hurricanes search for their old nasty edge, Sooners coach Bob Stoops will search for a quarterback. Will either team be searching for a championship season?

> USC at Nebraska, Sept. 15.

The Trojans manhandled the Cornhuskers last year, so this will provide a barometer for Nebraska and its chances of repeating as Big 12 North champion.

> Texas A&M at Miami, Sept. 20

The Thursday night game is the first road test for the Aggies, whose travels will take them to several other dangerous places. This trip to Florida might not be much fun.

> Texas Tech at Oklahoma State, Sept. 22

Points aplenty as quarterbacks Graham Harrell and Bobby Reid duel it out in an offensive spectacular.

> Texas vs. Oklahoma in Dallas, Oct. 6

The Longhorns have prevailed the last two years and should do so again if experience at quarterback is as crucial as it has been. Can Bob Stoops' ego survive a Texas threepeat?

> Nebraska at Texas, Oct. 27

Texas has won three straight from the Big Red and six of seven, including three in a row at Lincoln.

> Texas at Texas A&M, Nov. 23

The Longhorns will be looking for revenge after losing at home to the Aggies last November. Will this possibly be Fran's last game?

> Dream schedule Missouri. The Tigers face Illinois in neutral St. Louis, go to Ole Miss, play host to Western Michigan and Illinois State and, after a week off, open—and maybe decide—the Big 12 North with a home game against Nebraska, a team they've beaten in their last two meetings at Faurot Field.

> Nightmare schedule Texas A&M. Dennis Franchione's path to survival is fraught with angry teams, starting with the same Montana State that blemished the start of Dan Hawkins' tenure in Colorado and later a hungry Miami on the road. The

Aggies also must travel to Oklahoma, Nebraska, Texas Tech and Missouri before finishing with a home date against Texas. Leave a forwarding address, Fran.

> Bowl bound Pencil in Texas and Oklahoma with the winner of their October 6 meeting perhaps headed to New Orleans for the BCS title game. Texas Tech will go bowling for an eighth straight year and Oklahoma State for a fifth time in six years. Texas A&M had better for Franchione's sake. Nebraska also is a sure bet, as is Missouri. Kansas and Kansas State are long shots.

> Who they don't play

Baylor: Iowa State, Missouri, Nebraska
Colorado: Oklahoma State, Texas, Texas A&M
Kansas: Oklahoma, Texas, Texas Tech
Kansas State: Oklahoma, Texas A&M, Texas Tech
Iowa State: Baylor, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M
Missouri: Baylor, Oklahoma State, Texas
Nebraska: Baylor, Oklahoma, Texas Tech
Oklahoma: Kansas, Kansas State, Nebraska
Oklahoma State: Colorado, Iowa State, Missouri
Texas: Colorado, Kansas, Missouri
Texas A&M: Colorado, Kansas State, Iowa State
Texas Tech: Kansas, Kansas State, Nebraska

Guys who change game plans

Jorvorskie Lane, RB, Texas A&M. Defenses have to stack the middle to slow down the J-Train because if he gets his feet going, God help the 180-pound cornerback clinging to one of his legs. If Lane starts the season strong, burner Mike Goodson will kill defenses on the outside.

Bobby Reid, QB, Oklahoma State. The ultimate athlete can hurt you in so many ways—and he has barely scratched the surface of his potential. Look for a dominant performance in 2007.

Adarius Bowman, WR, Oklahoma State. He's a big-play machine who averaged 19.7 yards per catch last season. Not only can he run after the catch, he requires double coverage on every play.

Limas Sweed, WR, Texas. Cornerbacks must know where he lines up on every play and hope for safety help. He's a big play waiting to happen.

Reggie Smith, S/CB, Oklahoma. He's so good, his coaches seem perplexed about whether to maximize his speed and physical tools at cornerback or safety. Quarterbacks will be wise to avoid him; punters will be even smarter to kick away from this explosive kick returner.

Guys who make game plans

ON THE HOT SEAT: Dennis Franchione, Texas A&M. His seat stays warm and could reach the boiling point if he doesn't produce big win numbers and a bowl victory for this success-starved program. Dan Hawkins' chair also is unsteady in high-altitude Colorado.

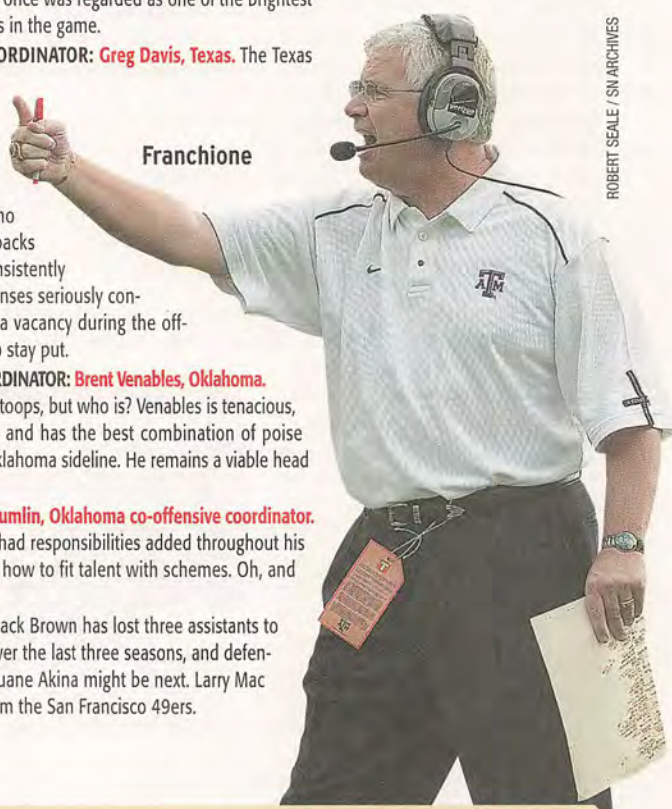
BEST COACH: Mack Brown, Texas. The best CEO in college football is equal parts recruiter, delegator and motivator. And Brown once was regarded as one of the brightest young offensive minds in the game.

BEST OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Davis, Texas. The Texas governor doesn't get as much intense scrutiny as the man who calls plays for the Longhorns. The man who has sent two quarterbacks to the NFL and consistently produces potent offenses seriously considered the Minnesota vacancy during the off-season but decided to stay put.

BEST DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brent Venables, Oklahoma. He may not be Mike Stoops, but who is? Venables is tenacious, loves the corner blitz and has the best combination of poise and passion on the Oklahoma sideline. He remains a viable head coaching candidate.

RISEING STAR: Kevin Sumlin, Oklahoma co-offensive coordinator. A smart guy who has had responsibilities added throughout his career, Sumlin knows how to fit talent with schemes. Oh, and he can recruit, too.

BEST STAFF: Texas. Mack Brown has lost three assistants to head coaching jobs over the last three seasons, and defensive co-coordinator Duane Akina might be next. Larry Mac Duff joins the staff from the San Francisco 49ers.



Franchione

ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

Members of the OU offensive line, ranked No. 1 in the Big 12 and No. 2 in the nation, include Jon Cooper (front), Trent Williams (71), Brannndon Braxton (center), Phil Loadholt (back left), George Robinson (back right), and Brandon Walker (73).

TY RUSSELL

UNIT rankings

	Backfield	Receivers	Offensive line	Overall	Defensive line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
Baylor	12	12	5	11	9	5	11	10	12	10
Colorado	11	10	10	12	10	6	6	7	7	11
Iowa State	7	6	11	7	12	9	12	12	10	12
Kansas	10	9	8	9	11	11	10	11	9	7
Kansas State	9	11	9	10	6	8	5	6	6	8
Missouri	3	5	7	5	5	10	8	9	4	9
Nebraska	8	4	6	6	4	1	9	5	11	4
Oklahoma	6	2	1	2	3	3	1	1	2	2
Oklahoma State	4	3	3	3	7	2	3	3	1	5
Texas	1	1	4	1	1	4	7	2	5	1
Texas A&M	2	7	2	4	2	7	4	4	3	6
Texas Tech	5	8	12	8	8	12	2	8	8	3

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

Returning leaders

RUSHING	Player, school, class	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.
1.	Tony Temple, Missouri, Sr.	13	193	1,063	5.5	65	7	81.8	33
2.	Shannon Woods, Texas Tech, Jr.	13	152	926	6.1	51	10	71.2	47
3.	Mike Goodson, Texas A&M, So.	13	127	847	6.7	64	4	65.2	57
4.	Jamaal Charles, Texas, Jr.	12	155	831	5.4	46	7	69.3	60
5.	Dantrell Savage, Oklahoma State, Sr.	11	126	820	6.5	70	8	74.5	62

PASSING	Player, school, class	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1.	Graham Harrell, Texas Tech, Jr.	13	412	617	66.8	11	4,555	11.1	38	145.5	3
2.	Chase Daniel, Missouri, Jr.	13	287	452	63.5	10	3,527	12.3	28	145.1	8
3.	Colt McCoy, Texas, So.	13	217	318	68.2	7	2,570	11.8	29	161.8	35
4.	Bret Meyer, Iowa State, Sr.	12	211	374	56.4	12	2,546	12.1	12	117.8	37
5.	Stephen McGee, Texas A&M, Jr.	13	194	313	62.0	2	2,295	11.8	12	134.9	49

RECEIVING	Player, school, class	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.
1.	Shannon Woods, Texas Tech, Jr.	13	75	572	54	2	5.8	7.6	44.0	15
2.	Malcolm Kelly, Oklahoma, Jr.	14	62	993	73	10	4.4	16.0	70.9	t36
3.	Adarius Bowman, Oklahoma State, Sr.	13	60	1,181	75	12	4.6	19.7	90.8	t42
4.	Chase Coffman, Missouri, Jr.	13	58	638	37	9	4.5	11.0	49.1	t51
5.	Martin Rucker, Missouri, Sr.	13	53	511	47	5	4.1	9.6	39.3	t77

Recruiting buzz

Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact	Diamond in the rough
1. Texas	OL Tray Allen, 6-4/305	DB Curtis Brown, 6-0/174	DE Sam Acho, 6-2/250
2. Nebraska	WR Niles Paul, 6-2/210	RB Quentin Castille, 6-1/234	WR Curenski Gilleylen, 6-0/210
3. Oklahoma	LB Mike Reed, 6-4/245	QB Keith Nichol, 6-2/195	WR Corey Wilson, 6-0/184
4. Oklahoma State	WR Dez Bryant, 6-1/195	WR Williams Cole, 5-10/165	DE Jamie Blatnick, 6-3/245
5. Colorado	OL Ryan Miller, 6-6/278	RB P.T. Gates, 5-11/195	DT Chris Perri, 6-4/265
6. Missouri	DE Michael Keck, 6-5/215	DT Andy Maples, 6-3/300	ATH Gilbert Moye, 6-2/200
7. Kansas State	ATH Lamark Brown, 6-3/215	DB Gary Chandler, 5-11/186	WR Danny Hogan, 6-2/185
8. Texas A&M	RB Bradley Stephens, 5-10/185	LB Derrick Stephens, 6-3/220	OL Daniel Baker, 6-6/285
9. Kansas	DB Ryan Murphy, 5-10/171	DB Patrick Resby, 6-2/195	LB Justin Springer, 6-4/220
10. Texas Tech	OL Lonnie Edwards, 6-5/305	WR Jacob Amie, 6-4/224	DT Bobby Agoucha, 6-4/300
11. Iowa State	RB Jamiah Bass, 6-1/210	WR Wallace Franklin, 6-3/175	DT Jerrod Black, 6-2/280
12. Baylor	LB Earl Patin, 6-1/228	QB John David Weed, 6-5/225	DB V.J. McElroy, 6-1/180

Rankings by Rivals.com

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
Texas	10-3	13-0* ^A	11-1	10-3	11-2	55-9
Oklahoma	11-3*	8-4	12-1*	12-2	12-2*	55-12
Texas Tech	8-5	9-3	8-4	8-5	9-5	42-22
Nebraska	9-5	8-4	5-6	10-3	7-7	39-25
Kansas State	7-6	5-6	4-7	11-4*	11-2	38-25
Oklahoma State	7-6	4-7	7-5	9-4	8-5	35-27
Missouri	8-5	7-5	5-6	8-5	5-7	33-28
Texas A&M	9-4	5-6	7-5	4-8	6-6	31-29
Colorado	2-10	7-6	8-5	5-7	9-5	31-33
Iowa State	4-8	7-5	7-5	2-10	7-7	27-35
Kansas	6-6	7-5	4-7	6-7	2-10	25-35
Baylor	4-8	5-6	3-8	3-9	3-9	18-40

*Conference champ ^ANational champ

CORNHUSKERS

It took Bill Callahan three seasons to get the Huskers back into the Big 12 championship game. The next step is winning the school's first league title since 1999 and returning to a BCS bowl. The task won't be easy; there are important lineup spots to fill and the schedule includes Wake Forest, USC, Texas, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M and Missouri.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Huskers got back to running the ball with authority last season. With an improving line and two capable backs, Callahan can

stay with that approach. New coordinator Shawn Watson was elevated from tight ends coach to replace Jay Norvell (UCLA), but Callahan will continue to call the plays.

SKILL POSITIONS All eyes are on Arizona State transfer Sam Keller, who was a Heisman candidate with the Sun Devils. He's 6-4, 230 pounds and has an NFL arm. He also is a fifth-year player, so he brings savvy to the position.

Keller can make every kind of throw and, unlike Zac Taylor—the Big 12 offensive player of the year last season—is mobile enough to make plays outside the pocket. Running back Marlon Lucky is a multipurpose threat who can make people miss, but can his body take every-down pounding? If Cody Glenn can shake a nagging foot injury, his power could give the Huskers a tough 1-2 punch. Maurice Purify made a splash as a physical big-play receiver last year; he, Terrence Nunn and Todd Peterson all can run, catch and score. Look for Will Henry to join that group. Tight ends J.B. Phillips, Josh Mueller and Hunter

Quick hits

Stadium: Memorial (artificial, 81,067).

Site: Lincoln, Neb.

Coach: Bill Callahan (22-15, 3 years)

Offensive coordinator: Shawn Watson (1st year, 2nd at school)

Defensive coordinator:

Kevin Cosgrove (4th year)

Last league title won: 1999.

Last year not in a bowl: 2004.

2006 record: 9-5, 6-2/1st

Big 12 North

Big 12 championship game:

Lost to Oklahoma, 21-7

Cotton Bowl: Lost to Auburn, 17-14



MICHAEL McNAMARA / SN ARCHIVES

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Sam Keller. What can Bill Callahan's offense do with a big-time talent running it? Keller is considered a swashbuckling, Brett Favre-like playmaker. If Keller matches such hype, Nebraska will have a big year.¶

2 SS Larry Asante. Nebraska has a lot of questions on defense. One of them is: Can it find a sure tackler with some attitude to play in the secondary? Asante, a junior college transfer from Coffeyville, Kan., is a big hitter.¶

A Big 12 coach says ...

Bill Callahan is slowly getting his system in place. But you don't fear Nebraska like you did back in the 1990s. They have some good athletes, but it's nothing like they used to have. ... I know they like QB **Sam Keller** a lot. But from what I can tell, they are gonna let some other guys compete for the job. The quarterback has a lot of pressure in this offense. ... They have three really good running backs. Is there a great one? I don't know. ... Defensive coordinator **Kevin Cosgrove** is really aggressive. He's not a bend-but-don't-break guy.

Teafatiller are solid, but they're primarily blockers, and they don't approach the receiving level of predecessor Matt Herian.

OFFENSIVE LINE Nebraska finally might have a dominant line again. The revolving door at left tackle stopped last season with the emergence of Carl Nicks, an all-league candidate. Matt Slauson should dominate at right guard. He's a mauler. Center Brett Byford and right guards Mike Huff and Andy Christensen fill the middle. Right tackle could be a weakness; Lydon Murtha is battling redshirt freshmen D.J. Jones and Keith Williams.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY With an improved backfield and veteran linebackers, will coordinator Kevin Cosgrove take more chances this season? He has blitzed and laid back in his time with the Huskers, and he can be unpredictable: He used a safety at linebacker to spy Missouri quarterback Chase Daniel last season, then didn't show that alignment again.

FRONT SEVEN Last year's front four is gone, but the replacements offer promise. End Barry Turner is a potential all-league candidate. He has a great burst and a quick first step. He also is very powerful. The coaches are confident tackles Ndamukong Suh (19 tackles, 3.5 sacks) and Ty Steinkuhler, the son of former Huskers guard Dean Steinkuhler, will be forces. Like his father, Ty is athletic and powerful. The other end, Zach Potter, is a question mark. He hasn't shown a lot of progress and has been limited mainly to special teams.

The starting linebackers—Bo Ruud, Corey McKeon and Steve Octavien—are among the Big 12's best. They're fast and experienced. Ruud is moving from weak side to strong side to make room for Octavien, a big hitter who also can cover backs and receivers. Behind them are Lance Brandenburg and Phillip Dillard, who showed great promise before suffering a season-ending knee injury in last year's opener.

SECONDARY This unit could become settled in a hurry if Zackary Bowman and Larry Asante can deliver. Bowman was a shutdown corner in 2005 but had his senior year derailed with an ACL injury on the first day of fall practice last August. A return to form by Bowman can make life easier for Cortney Grixby, who was a target last season. Asante is expected to bring a hard-hitting attitude to strong safety. Tierre Green moves to free safety, where his speed can be better utilized.

SPECIAL TEAMS The Huskers might have to depend on true freshman Adi Kunalic to kick field goals. Nebraska hasn't returned a kick for a touchdown under Callahan. The staff is hopeful Marcus Mendoza, a speedy freshman running back, can change that.

COACHING STAFF For a group that was put together in a hurry four years ago, Callahan's staff has been stable and solid. In the offseason, Joe Rudolph was hired to handle Watson's tight end duties, and Buddy Wyatt replaced John Blake (North Carolina) as defensive line coach.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Marlon Lucky	141	728	5.2	6
Cody Glenn	71	370	5.2	8

Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD
Joe Ganz	7-13-0	122	3

Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Terrence Nunn	42	597	14.2	3
Maurice Purify	34	630	18.5	7

Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Marlon Lucky	8	153	19.1	0

Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
None					

Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL	Yds.
Andre Jones	52	22	74	2	13
Corey McKeon	32	37	69	8	28
Bo Ruud	36	29	65	7	31

Sacks: Ndamukong Suh (3.5)

Interceptions: Ruud (2)

Lucky



ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	16	Maurice Purify (6-4, 220, Sr.)
	87	Nate Swift (6-2, 200, Jr.)
LT	77	Carl Nicks (6-5, 330, Sr.)
	97	Mike Smith (6-6, 285, Fr.)
LG	62	Andy Christensen (6-3, 300, Jr.)
	68	Keith Williams (6-5, 310, Fr.)
C	59	Brett Byford (6-3, 300, Sr.)
	75	Victory Haines (6-7, 290, Sr.)
RG	70	Matt Slauson (6-5, 335, Jr.)
	61	Mike Huff (6-4, 300, So.)
RT	76	Lydon Murtha (6-7, 305, Jr.)
	73	D.J. Jones (6-5, 310, Fr.)
TE	85	J.B. Phillips (6-3, 245, Sr.)
	89	Hunter Teafatiller (6-3, 230, Jr.)
WR	83	Terrence Nunn (6-0, 190, Sr.)
	17	Todd Peterson (6-4, 210, Jr.)
QB	5	Sam Keller (6-4, 230, Sr.)
	12	Joe Ganz (6-1, 200, Jr.)
RB	20	Marlon Lucky (6-0, 210, Jr.)
	34	Cody Glenn (6-0, 230, Jr.)
FB	48	Andy Sand (6-2, 230, Sr.)
	36	Thomas Lawson (6-0, 240, Jr.)
K	37	Jake Wesch (6-1, 200, Jr.)
KR	20	Marlon Lucky (6-0, 210, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Nevada		
9-8	at Wake Forest		2-0
9-15	USC	10-28	0-2-1
9-22	Ball State		
9-29	Iowa State	28-14	3-2
10-6	▲ at Missouri	34-20	3-2
10-13	Oklahoma State	29-41	3-2
10-20	● Texas A&M	28-27	4-1
10-27	■ at Texas	20-22	1-4
11-3	at Kansas	39-32	4-1
11-10	Kansas State	21-3	2-3
11-23	at Colorado*	37-14	3-2

*Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 2nd

>The Series (Texas 4-7): The Longhorns have had a ruinous impact on Nebraska a few times. Remember 1996? How about 1999? It could happen again if the Huskers' rebuilt defensive front hasn't developed.

>The Showdown at Missouri: Let's call this a de facto Big 12 North title game. The Tigers' offense will stretch the Huskers every direction. Nebraska has lost its last two times in Columbia.

>The Smack Sticker shock. There's Wake Forest, USC and Texas. Don't forget about Texas A&M. Nix those national title dreams and focus on winning the Big 12. That means going 4-0 in league play at home and splitting on the road. It's possible and should be enough to win the North.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	99	Barry Turner (6-3, 250, Jr.)
	88	Clayton Sievers (6-4, 245, Jr.)
T	43	Ty Steinkuhler (6-3, 285, Jr.)
	96	Brandon Johnson (6-3, 315, Sr.)
NT	93	Ndamukong Suh (6-4, 305, So.)
	56	Shukree Barfield (6-4, 310, Jr.)
E	98	Zach Potter (6-7, 280, Jr.)
	95	Pierre Allen (6-5, 265, Fr.)
SLB	51	Bo Ruud (6-3, 235, Sr.)
	38	Kyle Moore (6-2, 225, Fr.)
MLB	13	Corey McKeon (6-1, 225, Sr.)
	40	Lance Brandenburg (6-1, 230, Sr.)
WLB	15	Steve Octavien (6-0, 240, Sr.)
	40	Lance Brandenburg (6-1, 230, Sr.)
CB	25	Andre Jones (6-0, 190, Sr.)
	14	Zackary Bowman (6-2, 200, Sr.)
FS	30	Tierre Green (6-1, 200, Sr.)
	9	Bryan Wilson (6-1, 205, Sr.)
SS	4	Larry Asante (6-1, 210, So.)
	3	Rickey Thenarse (6-0, 190, So.)
CB	2	Cortney Grixby (5-9, 170, Sr.)
	5	Armando Murillo (6-0, 195, Jr.)
P	97	Dan Titchener (6-0, 200, Jr.)
PR	2	Cortney Grixby (5-9, 170, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

TIGERS

There's a lot to like about this team. Start with one of the most explosive offenses in the Big 12. Then consider that Nebraska comes to Columbia this year and the rivalry battle against Kansas has been moved from hostile Lawrence to Kansas City. This is a squad with experience and firepower, which makes it all the more imperative for coach Gary Pinkel finally to win something—maybe the Big 12 North.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Pinkel's version of the spread keeps defenses guessing. The Tigers like to spread the ball among their athletic tight ends, speedy wide receivers and finesse running backs. But what about those frustrating, empty-backfield goal-line failures last season? You get the feeling this program won't take the next big step until it can pound the ball when it has to.

SKILL POSITIONS Brad who? Chase Daniel was a record-setting replacement to Brad Smith, who was an electrifying playmaker but awkward fit in this offense. Daniel looks like he was born to run the spread. He set school records last season for touchdown passes (28), passing yards (3,527) and total offense (3,906) and ranked fourth in the Big 12 in pass efficiency. His goal this year will be to play bigger in big games (Oklahoma and Nebraska) and cut down on interceptions (10).

The emergence of a big-play back can only help Daniel. That might be Tony Temple, who was the epitome of so-so until the Sun Bowl, when he rushed for 194 yards and two touchdowns. If that Temple shows up, watch out.

Look for big things from wideout Will Franklin, who earned go-to status last year before a shoulder injury sidelined him for most

Daniel

Quick hits

Stadium: Memorial (artificial, 68,349).

Site: Columbia, Mo.

Coach: Gary Pinkel (37-35, 6 years; 110-72-3 overall, 16 years)

Offensive coordinator: Dave Christensen (7th year)

Defensive coordinator: Matt Eberflus (7th year)

Last league title won: 1969 (Big Eight).

Last year not in a bowl: 2004.

2006 record: 8-5, 4-4/T2nd Big 12 North

Sun Bowl: Lost to Oregon State, 39-38

MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB Tony Temple. Mizzou finished eighth among Big 12 teams in rushing last year (149.5). That won't cut it for a Big 12 title contender. Temple showed in the Sun Bowl that he can carry the load. So give him the ball.

2 OLB Sean Weatherspoon. The Tigers need people to step up on defense. Look for weakside linebacker Weatherspoon, who impressed the coaches last year as a reserve and on special teams, to become a playmaker.



A Big 12 coach says ...

They have that no-huddle, spread offense, and they are really efficient with it. QB **Chase Daniel** is a good player. He's a tough guy who can move around. They key for them beating the better teams in the Big 12 is developing a good ground game. ... I like the tight ends, but they aren't prototype tight ends that they like to flex out in the offense. They are more like receivers. ... They like to mix it up on defense, bringing pressure and playing coverage. But they have a lot of guys to replace on defense. They could get winded.

of the final three games. Franklin heads a long list of inviting targets that includes wideouts Tommy Saunders, Jared Perry, Danario Alexander, Jeremy Maclin and one of the best tight end duos in the nation—Martin Rucker (53 catches, five TDs) and Chase Coffman (58 catches, nine TDs).

OFFENSIVE LINE Three starters return to a strong front wall: center Adam Spieker, a four-year starter, left tackle Tyler Luellen and left guard Ryan Madison. The Tigers have to replace the right side, including all-conference tackle Joel Clinger, and likely will start a couple of sophomores. Look for Kurtis Gregory to start at right guard after recuperating from shoulder surgery. Monte Wyrick also could be in the guard rotation. Dain Wise is projected to start at right tackle. **DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY** The Tigers must replace six starters from a group that excelled in coverage but struggled against the run. Pinkel wants big improvement up front and needs to get pressure on the passer.

FRONT SEVEN The middle of the front wall looks strong with nose tackle Lorenzo Williams and the return of tackle Ziggy Hood, who was terrorizing blockers last year before injuring his foot. Replacements must step up at end, where Mizzou loses Brian Smith, its all-time sacks leader. Stryker Sulak, who recovered three fumbles in five starts last year, will start at one end with Tommy Chavis at the other. Both have big-play potential, though depth could be a problem.

Brock Christopher, the only returning starter at linebacker, will move from the strong side to the middle, where he should be more comfortable. Van Alexander and Sean Weatherspoon also are slotted for starting jobs, but keep an eye on freshmen Luke Lambert and Michael Keck, two top-line recruits who joined the program in January and made a spring push.

SECONDARY Both starting safeties are gone, but potential replacements Pig Brown and William Moore have plenty of experience. To add depth, coordinator Matt Eberflus moved cornerback Del Howard to strong safety in the spring. Moore made four starts at free safety last year and returned an interception for a touchdown against Texas Tech. Brown showed promise until suffering an ankle injury. Darnell Terrell and Hardy Ricks will man the corner spots. Terrell is the secondary's "stopper." Ricks was pressed into action last year and impressed coaches with his playmaking ability.

SPECIAL TEAMS Kicking will be a strength with Jeff Wolfert coming off a surprising season in which he won the job in fall camp and went on to become a Groza Award semifinalist. Punter Adam Crossett can be erratic, but he's much better than last season's 39.4-yard average suggests.

COACHING STAFF Is Pinkel still on the hot seat? If so, how do you explain a new contract that runs through 2011? Dave Christensen and Eberflus enter their seventh seasons at Mizzou.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Tony Temple	193	1,063	5.5	7	
Chase Daniel	147	379	2.6	4	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Chase Daniel	287-452-10	3,527		28	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Chase Coffman	58	638	11.0	9	
Martin Rucker	53	511	9.6	5	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Earl Goldsmith	13	253	19.5	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Jeff Wolfert	45	45	18	20	99
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Brock Christopher	48	39	87	6.5/10	
Darnell Terrell	39	19	58	3/18	
Lorenzo Williams	25	28	53	10.5/44	
Sacks: Williams (6)					

Sacks: Williams (6)

Interceptions: Del Howard (2)

Temple



MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	vs. Illinois*		3-2
9-8	at Mississippi	34-7	4-1
9-15	Western Michigan		1-0
9-22	Illinois State		
10-6	▲ Nebraska	20-34	2-3
10-13	■ at Oklahoma	10-26	1-4
10-20	Texas Tech	38-21	4-1
10-27	Iowa State	16-21	3-2
11-3	at Colorado	28-13	2-3
11-10	● Texas A&M	19-25	2-3
11-17	at Kansas State	41-21	1-4
11-24	vs. Kansas^	42-17	2-3

*at St. Louis ^at Kansas City

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 7th

>The Series Kansas (54-52-9): No one has to remind Gary Pinkel that he's 3-3 vs. the Jayhawks. A season-ending loss here could be his most painful yet.

>The Showdown Nebraska: The Tigers know they can beat the Huskers, which wasn't always the case. Mizzou will score, but will the Tigers be able to stop the Cornhuskers?

>The Smack Big 12 North champs? Why not? The division remains devoid of a powerhouse. And Mizzou's offense could be the best in the conference. The defense holds the key. See how it holds up during a tough three-game stretch to start October. The first two games of the year are even more critical for a program that still lacks swagger. Lose both, and doubt continues.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	2	Will Franklin (6-2, 205, Sr.)
	8	Jared Perry (6-1, 170, So.)
LT	79	Tyler Luellen (6-7, 295, Sr.)
	61	Colin Brown (6-8, 325, Jr.)
LG	76	Ryan Madison (6-5, 300, Jr.)
	51	James Stigall (6-3, 305, So.)
C	77	Adam Spieker (6-3, 305, Sr.)
	62	Tim Barnes (6-4, 305, Fr.)
RG	78	Kurtis Gregory (6-5, 305, So.)
	71	Monte Wyrick (6-5, 325, Sr.)
RT	68	Dain Wise (6-5, 305, So.)
	54	Chris Tipton (6-4, 310, Sr.)
TE	82	Martin Rucker (6-6, 255, Sr.)
	45	Chase Coffman (6-6, 245, Jr.)
WR	81	Danario Alexander (6-4, 205, So.)
	9	Jeremy Maclin (6-1, 185, Fr.)
WR	84	Tommy Saunders (6-0, 210, Jr.)
	85	Greg Bracey (6-2, 215, Sr.)
QB	10	Chase Daniel (6-0, 225, Jr.)
	14	Chase Patton (6-5, 220, Jr.)
RB	22	Tony Temple (5-9, 200, Sr.)
	1	Jimmy Jackson (5-9, 200, Jr.)
K	99	Jeff Wolfert (6-2, 185, Jr.)
KR	7	Earl Goldsmith (5-9, 200, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	63	Tommy Chavis (6-2, 280, Jr.)
	48	Jaysen Corbett (6-4, 260, Jr.)
T	94	Ziggy Hood (6-4, 295, Jr.)
	91	Charles Gaines (6-1, 305, Sr.)
NT	99	Lorenzo Williams (6-1, 295, Sr.)
	96	Jaron Baston (6-1, 295, So.)
E	38	Stryker Sulak (6-5, 240, Jr.)
	97	Tarell Corby (6-3, 235, So.)
SLB	5	Van Alexander (6-0, 230, Jr.)
	18	Steve Redmond (6-0, 235, Jr.)
MLB	34	Brock Christopher (6-2, 240, Jr.)
	33	Luke Lambert* (6-3, 215, Fr.)
WLB	12	Sean Weatherspoon (6-1, 230, So.)
	49	Michael Keck* (6-5, 215, Fr.)
CB	3	Darnell Terrell (6-3, 205, Sr.)
	21	Castine Bridges (6-2, 200, Jr.)
FS	1	William Moore (6-1, 215, Jr.)
	24	Mack Breed (6-1, 205, Jr.)
SS	13	Pig Brown (5-11, 205, Sr.)
	8	Justin Garrett (6-2, 200, Jr.)
CB	28	Hardy Ricks (6-0, 190, So.)
	6	Paul Simpson (6-2, 190, Sr.)
P	90	Adam Crossett (6-3, 225, Sr.)
PR	84	Tommy Saunders (6-0, 210, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

KANSAS STATE WILDCATS

SN projection **3rd, 7-5**National rank **46**

Ron Prince gained some momentum in his first year in Manhattan, but it will be hard to keep it rolling because the Wildcats have six road games—including Auburn and Fresno State. Whether K-State gets to a bowl likely will depend on how much sophomore quarterback Josh Freeman develops.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Coordinator James Franklin's plan is simple: Put the ball in Freeman's hand and let the big guy make plays—with his arm or legs. The Wildcats need to improve on their 115.2 rushing yards per game.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	83	Daniel Gonzalez (6-3, 216, Sr.)
	31	Tony Purvis (5-11, 159, So.)
LT	78	Alesana Alesana (6-6, 295, Jr.)
	71	Derek Meyer (6-6, 301, So.)
LG	69	Caleb Handy (6-1, 313, Jr.)
	68	Brad Rooker (6-6, 291, Jr.)
C	79	Jordan Bedore (6-3, 302, Jr.)
	54	Trevor Viers (6-4, 259, So.)
RG	65	Logan Robinson (6-8, 338, Sr.)
	67	Kenneth Mayfield (6-4, 300, Fr.)
RT	64	Nick Stringer (6-6, 271, So.)
	73	Gerard Spexarth (6-6, 312, Jr.)
TE	89	Rashaad Norwood (6-3, 229, Sr.)
	85	Jeron Mastrud (6-6, 255, So.)
WR	27	Jordy Nelson (6-2, 213, Sr.)
	12	Matt Wykes (6-3, 213, Jr.)
WR	88	Cedric Wilson (6-1, 190, Jr.)
	25	Toney Coleman (6-1, 193, Sr.)
QB	1	Josh Freeman (6-6, 238, So.)
	14	Carson Coffman (6-2, 200, Fr.)
RB	8	James Johnson (5-11, 200, Sr.)
	9	Leon Patton (5-7, 184, So.)
K	26	Tim Schwerdt (5-8, 174, Sr.)
KR	22	Justin McKinney (5-9, 185, Sr.)

SN All-conference

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Freeman started eight games as a freshman in 2006 and made a big jump in his last four before the bowl game, hitting 78 of 121 passes for 925 yards and throwing

Freeman



PETER AIKEN

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	95	Rob Jackson (6-3, 265, Sr.)
	92	Brandon Balkcom (6-0, 278, Jr.)
T	50	Alphonso Moran (6-0, 294, Jr.)
	99	Steven Cline (6-1, 291, Sr.)
E	96	Moses Manu (6-2, 258, Sr.)
		Mike Abana (6-7, 296, Jr.)
OLB	98	Ian Campbell (6-5, 232, Jr.)
	42	Ross Diehl (6-2, 220, So.)
ILB	53	Reggie Walker (6-0, 223, Jr.)
	39	John Houlik (5-10, 212, So.)
ILB	51	Justin Roland (6-0, 245, Sr.)
	37	Marcus Perry (6-1, 225, Sr.)
OLB	90	Eric Childs (6-3, 230, So.)
	43	Antwon Moore (5-10, 209, Jr.)
CB	4	Joshua Moore (5-10, 168, So.)
	3	Bryan Baldwin (5-10, 190, Sr.)
FS	2	Marcus Watts (6-1, 191, Sr.)
	30	Chris Carney (6-1, 175, So.)
SS	36	Andrew Erker (6-0, 195, Jr.)
	21	Gary Chandler (5-11, 186, Jr.)
CB	22	Justin McKinney (5-9, 185, Sr.)
	23	Ray Cheatham (6-0, 185, Jr.)
P	17	Tim Reyer (5-11, 208, Sr.)
PR	4	Joshua Moore (5-10, 168, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Bill Snyder Family (artificial, 52,000)

Site: Manhattan, Kan.

Coach: Ron Prince (7-6, 1 year)

Offensive coordinator: James Franklin (2nd year)

Defensive coordinator: Tim Tibesar (1st year, 2nd at school)

Last league title won: 2003. Last year not in a bowl: 2005.

2006 record: 7-6, 4-4/T2nd Big 12 North

Texas Bowl: Lost to Rutgers, 37-10

Returning leaders: Rushing—Leon Patton (108 att., 609 yards, 6 TDs). Passing—Josh Freeman (140-270-15, 1,780 yards, 6 TDs). Receiving—Jordy Nelson (39 rec., 547 yards, 1 TD).

for six touchdowns and running for one to lead K-State to a 3-1 record, including an upset of Texas. He showed up for spring practice weighing 255 pounds (17 more than last year), and he could be even tougher with the added bulk.

K-State has solid running backs in Leon Patton and James Johnson. Jordy Nelson is expected to be one of the top receivers in the Big 12 again after struggling with injuries last season. The line was a mess, though, and other than right tackle Nick Stringer and center Jordan Bedore, none of the positions are set. But seven starters return.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Raheem Morris went back to the NFL after one season in Manhattan, so Tim Tibesar will take over. He is installing a 3-4, which the Wildcats will mix in to help attack the growing number of spread offenses in the league.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The first order of business in incorporating the 3-4 is finding a home for Ian Campbell, an All-Big 12 end who had 11½ sacks last season. Campbell, a ferocious pass rusher and playmaker, might play some at outside linebacker, where he could still rush the quarterback. Rob Jackson, who had 8½ tackles for loss at end, will stay up front. At

linebacker, Reggie Walker has the most experience—with nine starts. The secondary is solid, though. It's led by fiery Marcus Watts, a tough playmaker who covers the field, delivers brutal hits and makes interceptions (three in '06).

SPECIAL TEAMS Patton, Justin McKinney and James Johnson

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at Auburn	
9-8	San Jose State	
9-15	Missouri State	
9-29	■ at Texas	45-42
10-6	● Kansas	20-39
10-13	Colorado	34-21
10-20	at Oklahoma State	31-27
10-27	Baylor	3-17
11-3	at Iowa State	31-10
11-10	at Nebraska	3-21
11-17	▲ Missouri	21-41
11-24	at Fresno State	

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 6th

returned kicks for touchdowns last season, and all are back. Punter Tim Reyer had a solid 42.1 yards per game last year. The Wildcats must find a replacement for big-legged kicker Jeff Snodgrass.

COACHING STAFF There was a ton of turnover in the offseason. The Wildcats have three new faces on staff: Dave Brock (receivers), Greg Burns (defensive backs) and Frank Leonard (tight ends), plus Tibesar, who moved from special teams.

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 **WR Jordy Nelson.** He was one of the best receivers in the Big 12 while playing hurt last year. Imagine what Nelson and quarterback Josh Freeman could do together if Nelson stays healthy.

2 **DE Rob Jackson.** He bloomed late last season and enters this season as an All-Big 12 candidate. Jackson's development makes the decision to move star end Ian Campbell to outside linebacker in the new 3-4 easier.



KANSAS

JAYHAWKS

SN projection 4th, 7-5

National rank 48

Quick hits

Stadium: Memorial (artificial, 50,071). **Site:** Lawrence, Kan.
Coach: Mark Mangino (25-35, 5 years)
Offensive coordinator: Ed Warinner (1st year, 3rd at school)
Defensive coordinator: Bill Young (6th year)

Last league title won: 1968 (Big Eight, tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 2005.

2006 record: 6-6, 3-5/4th Big 12 North

Returning leaders: Rushing—Kerry Meier (99 att., 346 yards, 5 TDs). Passing—Kerry Meier (104-184-10, 1,193 yards, 13 TDs). Receiving—Dexton Fields (45 rec., 455 yards, 5 TDs).

If the Jayhawks want to play the role of Big 12 North sleeper, they will have to learn to close the deal after 2006 overtime losses at Toledo and Nebraska and two other losses by a combined four points. But the Jayhawks have enough quarterback, receiving and defensive talent, plus a super friendly schedule (seven home game and Missouri in Kansas City) to make them dangerous.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The loss of hard-running Jon Cornish forces coach Mark Mangino to look to the perimeter for playmaking receivers Dexton Fields and Marcus Henry and tight end Derek Fine. New coordinator Ed Warinner, who returns to Kansas from Illinois, wants to make the passing game more vertical.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL The Jayhawks have two options at quarterback. The starter probably will be Kerry Meier, who threw for 1,193 yards and completed 56.5 percent of his passes in eight starts last season.

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Central Michigan	
9-8	SE Louisiana	
9-15	Toledo	31-37, OT
9-22	Fla. International	
10-6	• at Kansas State	39-20
10-13	Baylor	35-36
10-20	at Colorado	20-15
10-27	■ at Texas A&M	18-21
11-3	Nebraska	32-39, OT
11-10	at Oklahoma State	32-42
11-17	Iowa State	41-10
11-24	▲ vs. Missouri*	17-42

*at Kansas City

■ Toughest game • Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 12th



ALBERT DICKSON / SN

Meier also can tuck the ball and run, as can Todd Reesing, whose 2006 resume included a 63-yard run against Colorado. Nobody expects running back Jake Sharp to be as productive as Cornish, but he won't have to be because of the talent at receiver. Henry will man the "X" spot, which should allow him to go one-on-one with a weakside corner. Fields, underclassmen Tertavian Ingram, Micah Brown and Xavier Rambo and tight end Fine are weapons. Tackles Cesar Rodriguez and Anthony Collins return.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Bill Young's defenses always stop the run, but the Jayhawks lost too many games last year because a young secondary couldn't make key stops. That could change with a year of experience.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Tackle James McClinton will anchor a

re-energized front four that should include talented recruits Patrick Dorsey, Richard Johnson and Jake Lap-tad. Middle linebacker Mike Rivera is disruptive, whether penetrating a backfield or deflecting passes. Most of the attention will be on a secondary that should be improved. Aqib Talib, an all-conference corner, should benefit from the good health of Darrell Stuckey, a free safety who never fully recovered from a broken ankle last August.

SPECIAL TEAMS Scott Webb

made 13 field goals last year and was 8-of-8 from 30-39 yards. KU's defense will need punter Kyle Tucker to be as good as he was last year, when he pinned 23 of his punts inside the 20-yard line.

COACHING STAFF Mangino, who is 25-35 at Kansas, has had his moments against some good teams. But athletic director Lew Perkins loves his football, and a bowl game—with this schedule, probably a good bowl game—might be necessary if Mangino wants to keep his job.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	13	Marcus Herford (6-3, 210, Jr.)
	38	Raymond Brown (6-3, 200, Jr.)
LT	78	Anthony Collins (6-6, 320, Jr.)
	60	Jose Rodriguez (6-6, 255, So.)
LG	66	Adrian Mayes (6-3, 300, Jr.)
	70	Matt Darton (6-6, 310, Jr.)
C	50	Ryan Cantrell (6-3, 285, Jr.)
	55	John Marshall (6-2, 285, Fr.)
RG	79	Chet Hartley (6-4, 315, Jr.)
	67	Rameses Arceo (6-4, 310, Jr.)
RT	65	Cesar Rodriguez (6-7, 290, Sr.)
	63	Ian Wolfe (6-5, 280, Fr.)
TE	85	Derek Fine (6-3, 245, Sr.)
	83	Marc Jones (6-4, 265, Sr.)
WR	86	Marcus Henry (6-4, 210, Sr.)
	82	Jeff Foster (6-2, 195, Sr.)
QB	10	Kerry Meier (6-3, 215, So.)
	5	Todd Reesing (5-11, 190, So.)
RB	1	Jake Sharp (5-10, 195, So.)
	35	Brandon McAnderson (6-0, 235, Sr.)
WR	88	Dexton Fields (6-0, 200, Jr.)
	22	Angus Quigley (6-2, 225, So.)
K	39	Scott Webb (5-11, 180, Sr.)
KR	1	Jake Sharp (5-10, 195, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	81	Russell Brosen (6-4, 240, Jr.)
	84	Jeff Wheeler (6-7, 260, So.)
T	72	Todd Haselhorst (6-4, 300, Jr.)
	99	Jamal Greene (6-4, 295, Fr.)
T	93	James McClinton (6-1, 285, Sr.)
	94	Caleb Blakesley (6-5, 285, So.)
E	87	John Larson (6-3, 250, Jr.)
	47	Maxwell Onyegbule (6-4, 240, Fr.)
OLB	12	James Holt (6-3, 215, Jr.)
	58	Jake Schermer (6-2, 215, So.)
MLB	8	Joe Mortensen (6-1, 240, Jr.)
	40	Mike Rivera (6-3, 250, Jr.)
OLB	41	Arist Wright (5-10, 205, So.)
	44	Olaitan Ogundodu (6-1, 220, So.)
CB	3	Aqib Talib (6-2, 195, Jr.)
	4	Gary Green (5-9, 175, Jr.)
FS	25	Darrell Stuckey (6-1, 202, So.)
	46	Justin Thornton (6-1, 195, So.)
SS	36	Tang Bacheyie (6-1, 210, Jr.)
	7	Patrick Resby (6-2, 208, Jr.)
CB	24	Kendrick Harper (5-10, 190, Jr.)
	20	Anthony Webb (6-0, 175, So.)
P	15	Kyle Tucker (6-2, 210, Sr.)
PR	88	Dexton Fields (6-0, 200, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold • True freshman

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB Jake Sharp. Nobody will match Jon Cornish's school-record 1,457-yard rushing total, but the Jayhawks must have a running game. The spotlight falls on Sharp, a sophomore who has 21 career carries.

2 OLB Arist Wright. The Jayhawks need some star power at linebacker, and Wright, a redshirt sophomore, offered a glimpse of his playmaking ability with an interception TD against Baylor. He should be starting in the fall.



COLORADO

BUFFALOES

SN projection **5th, 4-8**National rank **80**

No one expected miracles in Dan Hawkins' first year in Boulder, but no one expected 2-10. Improvement won't be easy—the schedule is the Big 12's toughest, and the offense is searching for a quarterback and an identity. A .500 finish would be a step in the right direction.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Hawkins is known for a high-powered passing offense, but he likes a little smashmouth, too. Colorado ranked 22nd in the nation in rushing offense, but the Buffs struggled to get tough yards when they needed them. Moving Bernard Jackson from quarterback likely means they will try to use efficient passing to set up the run.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Red-shirt freshman Cody Hawkins, Dan Hawkins' son, and junior college transfer Nick Nelson got most of the snaps at quarterback in the spring, so Jackson likely will be moved to running back or receiver, where he can operate in a Slash-type

role. He rushed for 677 yards last year but threw seven interceptions to go along with seven touchdowns. Because coach Hawkins wants more out of the



MICHAEL MCNAMARA / SN ARCHIVES

passing game, Cody Hawkins appears to be the front-runner for the job. Despite running behind a patchwork line, tailback Hugh Charles rushed for 779 yards in '06. Wideout Alvin Barnett had 10 of his 21 catches in the last four games; his late-season momentum gives Colorado hope of an emerging playmaker. Riar Geer, who had a team-leading 24 catches and three touchdowns, is a playmaker at tight end.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Ron Collins came from Boise State in '06 with a reputation for stopping the run and creating turnovers. In his first year, the Buffs ranked fourth in the Big 12 in rush defense and third in turnover margin, and they'll look to improve on that.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The Buffs are strong up the middle with tackles George Hypolite and Brandon Nicolas return-

Quick hits

Stadium: Folsom Field (grass, 53,750). **Site:** Boulder, Colo.
Coach: Dan Hawkins (2-10, 1 year; 55-21 overall, 6 years)
Offensive coordinator: Mark Helfrich (2nd year)
Defensive coordinator: Ron Collins (2nd year)

Last league title won: 2001. **Last bowl appearance:** 2005.

2006 record: 2-10, 2-6/5th Big 12 North

Returning leaders: Rushing—Hugh Charles (139 att., 779 yards, 1 TD). Passing—Bernard Jackson (108-219-7, 1,298 yards, 7 TDs). Receiving—Riar Geer (24 rec., 261 yards, 3 TDs).

ing, but Big 12 sacks leader Abraham Wright is gone. Hawkins wants to use a rotation to keep the line fresh, but many of those players will be young, so expect growing pains. The team is in good shape at linebacker; Jordon Dizon was honorable mention all-conference, and Brad Jones was third on the team in tackles in '06. Terrence Wheatley, an All-Big 12 corner,

must improve a secondary that allowed opponents to complete 66.9 percent of their passes last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS Two-time All-American kicker Mason Crosby won't be easy to replace, but Kevin Eberhart has a strong leg. Matt DiLallo ranked fourth in the Big 12 in punting in '06.

COACHING STAFF Hawkins demanded more of his players in the offseason and expects better chemistry. Jeff Grimes, the new offensive line coach and running game coordinator, could have a big impact.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	4	Patrick Williams (6-2, 200, Jr.)
	48	Cody Crawford (5-11, 175, Jr.)
LT	77	Tyler Polumbus (6-8, 300, Sr.)
	72	Devin Head (6-4, 285, So.)
LG	65	Wes Palazzi (6-1, 285, Fr.)
	61	Erick Faatagi (6-2, 310, Jr.)
C	75	Daniel Sanders (6-3, 305, Jr.)
	56	Keenan Stevens (6-3, 275, Fr.)
RG	56	Keenan Stevens (6-3, 275, Fr.)
	61	Erick Faatagi (6-2, 310, Jr.)
RT	76	Edwin Harrison (6-4, 300, Sr.)
	72	Devin Head (6-4, 285, So.)
TE	87	Riar Geer (6-3, 245, So.)
	13	Joe Sanders (6-3, 235, Sr.)
WR	17	Alvin Barnett (5-11, 190, Sr.)
	83	Dusty Sprague (6-4, 190, Sr.)
QB	7	Cody Hawkins (5-11, 190, Fr.)
	3	Nick Nelson (6-1, 220, Jr.)
RB	2	Hugh Charles (5-8, 190, Sr.)
	27	Byron Ellis (6-0, 215, Sr.)
FB	32	Maurice Cantrell (6-0, 240, Jr.)
	41	Jake Behrens (6-0, 230, So.)
K	39	Kevin Eberhart (5-11, 195, Sr.)
KR	2	Hugh Charles (5-8, 190, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	91	Maurice Lucas (6-4, 255, Jr.)
	49	Drew Hudgins (6-4, 235, Jr.)
T	86	George Hypolite (6-1, 285, Jr.)
	69	Eric Lawson (6-3, 260, Fr.)
T	94	Brandon Nicolas (6-3, 280, Jr.)
	78	Jason Brace (6-4, 265, So.)
E	47	Alonzo Barrett (6-3, 235, Sr.)
	90	Marquez Herrod (6-2, 255, Fr.)
SLB	40	Brad Jones (6-3, 225, Jr.)
	52	Bryan Stengel (6-2, 210, So.)
MLB	10	Michael Sipili (6-1, 250, So.)
	34	R.J. Brown (6-1, 225, Jr.)
WLB	44	Jordon Dizon (6-0, 225, Sr.)
	54	Marcus Burton (6-0, 245, Jr.)
CB	26	Terrence Wheatley (5-10, 175, Sr.)
	23	Jalil Brown (6-1, 205, Fr.)
FS	15	Ryan Walters (5-11, 200, Jr.)
	20	Terry Wilson (5-10, 205, Jr.)
SS	25	Lionel Harris (6-0, 195, Sr.)
	9	Daniel Dykes (6-2, 205, Jr.)
CB	42	Benjamin Burney (5-11, 195, Jr.)
	3	Jimmy Smith (6-2, 200, Fr.)
P	14	Matt DiLallo (6-1, 205, So.)
PR	1	Stephone Robinson (5-8, 190, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	vs. Colorado State*	10-14
9-8	at Arizona State	3-21
9-15	Florida State	
9-22	Miami (Ohio)	
9-29	Oklahoma	3-24
10-6	at Baylor	31-34, 3OT
10-13	at Kansas State	21-34
10-20	Kansas	15-20
10-27	at Texas Tech	30-6
11-3	Missouri	13-28
11-10	at Iowa State	33-16
11-23	Nebraska^	14-37

*at Denver ^Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 1st



1 QB/RB/WR Bernard Jackson. He has played everywhere for the Buffs. He won't be the starting QB, but whether it's running the option or catching a pass out of the backfield or returning kicks, Jackson needs the ball.

2 SS Daniel Dykes. The secondary needs help, and it could come in the form of Dykes, who transferred from Idaho. The coaches see him as a smart player who can make big hits, break up passes and intercept them.



IOWA STATE CYCLONES

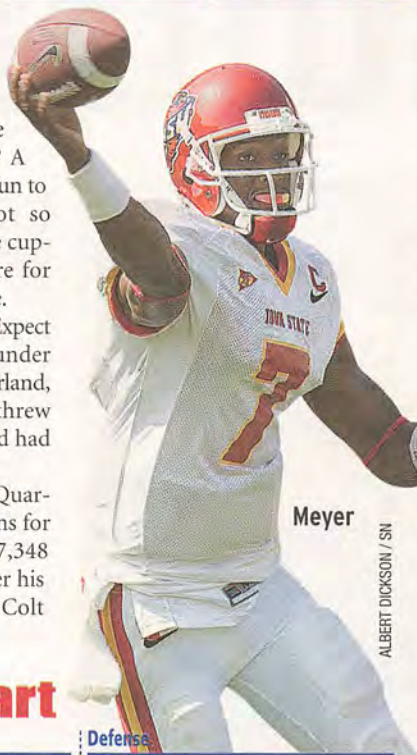
SN projection **6th, 3-9**

National rank **88**

What do you get when you put the hottest assistant coach in the country in Ames, Iowa? A story that will be a lot of fun to watch. Well, maybe not so much this season, but the cupboard certainly isn't bare for Gene Chizik at Iowa State.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Expect a high-flying offense under coordinator Robert McFarland, whose 2002 UCF team threw for nearly 4,000 yards and had two 1,000-yard receivers.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Quarterback Bret Meyer returns for his senior year with 7,348 career passing yards under his belt—only Hawaii's Colt



Meyer

ALBERT DICKSON / SN

Depth chart

Offense

Pos. No.	Name
WR 1	Todd Blythe (6-5, 209, Sr.)
82	Marquis Hamilton (6-3, 217, So.)
LT 75	Doug Dedrick (6-4, 271, So.)
67	Matt Hulbert (6-7, 280, Fr.)
LG 73	Reggie Stephens (6-3, 322, So.)
66	Joe Blaas (6-2, 297, Jr.)
C 60	Brandon Johnson (6-3, 309, Jr.)
55	Anthony Walker (6-2, 290, Sr.)
RG 70	Tom Schmeling (6-3, 295, Jr.)
77	Alex Alvarez (6-2, 290, So.)
RT 76	Lee Tibbs (6-4, 315, Sr.)
88	Ben Lamaak (6-4, 292, Fr.)
TE 41	Ben Barkema (6-3, 252, Sr.)
80	Brandon Tintin (6-4, 254, Sr.)
WR 5	R.J. Sumrall (6-1, 200, Jr.)
9	Euseph Messiah (5-10, 174, Jr.)
QB 7	Bret Meyer (6-3, 204, Sr.)
4	Austen Arnaud (6-3, 222, Fr.)
RB 6	Jason Scales (5-9, 217, Jr.)
22	Jason Harris (5-11, 208, Jr.)
FB 84	Derrick Catlett (6-4, 251, So.)
29	Brian Ekwelundu (5-11, 231, So.)
K 37	Bret Culbertson (6-6, 179, Sr.)
KR 7	Drenard Williams (5-11, 175, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos. No.	Name
E 29	Rashawn Parker (6-0, 249, So.)
25	Nick Frere (6-2, 244, Jr.)
T 93	Bryce Braaksma (6-3, 254, Sr.)
99	Nick Howe (6-3, 260, Sr.)
NG 71	Athyba Rubin (6-3, 321, Sr.)
62	Nate Frere (6-2, 306, So.)
E 47	Kurtis Taylor (6-2, 255, Jr.)
83	Travis Ferguson (6-5, 250, Jr.)
SLB 16	Jon Banks (6-2, 219, Sr.)
24	Derec Schmidgall (6-1, 223, So.)
MLB 43	Fred Garrin (6-1, 217, So.)
54	Jesse Smith (6-0, 233, So.)
WLB 15	Alvin Bowen (6-2, 216, Sr.)
42	Matt Leaders (6-0, 210, Fr.)
CB 9	Devin McDowell (5-9, 174, Fr.)
7	Drenard Williams (5-11, 175, So.)
FS 2	James Smith (5-8, 192, So.)
23	Steve Johnson (5-11, 196, So.)
SS 21	Caleb Berg (6-1, 202, Sr.)
20	Brandon Hunley (5-11, 201, Jr.)
CB 11	Chris Singleton (5-10, 191, Jr.)
6	Chris Brown (5-10, 171, Jr.)
P 13	Mike Brandtner (6-1, 208, So.)
PR 14	Zac Sandvig (5-10, 183, Fr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Jack Trice (grass, 46,721). **Site:** Ames, Iowa.
Coach: Gene Chizik (1st year)
Offensive coordinator: Robert McFarland (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Wayne Bolt (1st year)

Last league title won: 1912 (Missouri Valley, tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 2005.
2006 record: 4-8, 1-7/6th Big 12 North

Returning leaders: Rushing—Bret Meyer (137 att., 177 yards, 6 TDs). Passing—Bret Meyer (211-374-12, 2,546 yards, 12 TDs). Receiving—Todd Blythe (34 rec., 484 yards, 8 TDs).

Brennan and Michigan's Chad Henne are active Division I quarterbacks with more. Meyer can tuck and run, too, so it will be interesting to see if McFarland utilizes him outside the pocket. The player really lick-

ing his chops has to be receiver Todd Blythe who has been underutilized in his three seasons despite his 124 catches and 26 touchdowns. The bad news is, ISU returns only one experienced lineman. That might be the good news, too, though. Meyer was harassed in a collapsing pocket last season. The Cyclones need to replace running back Stevie Hicks. Look for his backup, Jason Scales, and incoming junior college transfer J.J. Bass to battle it out this fall.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Chizik used to study under Tampa Bay's Monte Kiffin, so watch for some cover 2. Chizik also likes to get after the quarterback with aggressive schemes that create turnovers.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The Cyclones must replace an all-Big 12 tackle and the school's all-time sacks leader. There will be several new faces up front, and all eyes will be on end Kurtis Taylor, a promising prospect who suffered a season-ending knee injury last August. Tackle Bryce Braaksma, a fifth-year senior who made 17 tackles and blocked a kick, likely will anchor the front four. Alvin "Ace" Bowen, who led the nation in tackles last season,

returns on the weak side. Starting strongside 'backer Jon Banks moved there from free safety last season and was good enough that he'll stay. Strong safety Caleb Berg heads up a young secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS Bret Culbertson gives Chizik a solid, experienced and accurate kicker. Culbertson never has missed an extra point and is 28-of-37 on field-goal attempts. Punter

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
8-30	Kent State*	
9-8	Northern Iowa	28-27
9-15	▲ Iowa	17-27
9-22	at Toledo	45-43, 3OT
9-29	at Nebraska	14-28
10-6	at Texas Tech	26-42
10-13	■ Texas	14-37
10-20	Oklahoma	9-34
10-27	at Missouri	21-16
11-3	● Kansas State	10-31
11-10	Colorado	16-33
11-17	at Kansas	10-41

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 5th

Mike Brandtner hopes to build on his 41.2-yard average.

COACHING STAFF No miracles are expected from Chizik this season. Then again, no one is sure what to expect from the boy wonder defensive coordinator who helped Texas win a national title in 2005. Chizik has a staff of veterans, but many came from non-BCS leagues. You have to wonder whether they can coach with the big boys in the Big 12.

2-POINT conversion

GET IT
DONE
OR ELSE

1 WR Milan Moses. Todd Blythe needs a reliable wing man, and Moses, a senior who has 42 career catches for 478 yards, could be it. With his speed, he also could be factor in the return game.

2 DE Kurtis Taylor. Big things were expected from Taylor before his season-ending knee injury last August. A former linebacker, he was booked to be a pass-rushing force. Now he actually can be.

LONGHORNS

Charles



Quick hits

Stadium: Memorial (grass, 85,123).
Site: Austin, Texas.

Coach: Mack Brown (93-22, 9 years; 179-96-1 overall, 23 years)

Offensive coordinator: Greg Davis (10th year)

Defensive coordinators: Duane Akina (3rd year, 6th at school); Larry Mac Duff (1st year)

Last league title won: 2005.

Last year not in a bowl: 1997.

2006 record: 10-3, 6-2/2nd Big 12 South

Alamo Bowl: Beat Iowa, 26-24

throw 29 touchdown passes—tying a national freshman record—with only seven interceptions, even though a pinched nerve in his neck limited his effectiveness in the final two regular-season games (both losses). A healthy McCoy might be the most savvy decision-maker among all quarterbacks in college football.

McCoy has good running skills and must become a greater threat on the ground to keep defenses from keying on Jamaal Charles, who is coming off a subpar season. Texas needs a big year from Charles, who has to combine toughness with his sprinter's speed. Chris Ogbonnaya and Vondrell McGee are reliable backups.

Limas Sweed, a physical playmaker, headlines a deep cast of receivers that includes ultra-consistent Quan Cosby

After six consecutive seasons with 10 or more wins, another talented Longhorns team will be gunning for its second national title in three years. There are no powerhouse opponents on the nonconference schedule, and Texas should be among the favorites to reach the BCS

championship game unless a suspect secondary and rebuilt offensive line become obstacles it can't overcome.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY After winning big with the I-formation power running game, a hybrid of the I and last year's shotgun, coach Mack Brown is searching for a new identity.

Texas lacks the fullback and tackle-breaking tailback to pound opponents between the tackles and instead will rely on a strong passing game to balance an attack that produced only four runs longer than 27 yards last season.

SKILL POSITIONS Colt McCoy emerged from obscurity to

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 C Dallas Griffin. The senior, who has played in 22 games without a start, is an academic superstar who relies on guile and finesse. Griffin will be asked to anchor a relatively young line and make all the right calls.

2 FS Drew Kelson. One of the fastest and more physical players on the team, Kelson has played tailback and linebacker without distinction. Now the senior is being asked to help stabilize a questionable secondary.

A Big 12 coach says ...

QB **Colt McCoy** played well last year, but they didn't ask him to do too much. They have most of their skill guys back on offense and may open things up. Both running backs are returning, so they'll be better. I like RB **Jamaal Charles** a lot. ... I don't know how big of a loss it will be with (coordinator Gene) Chizik gone. They'll run a new defensive system. Last year, the system put a lot of pressure on the back end of the defense, and they struggled to defend the pass. ... DE **Brian Orakpo** has a lot of tools. As he gets bigger, he'll be even better.

and sure-handed Jordan Shipley. Look for a breakout year from tight end Jermichael Finley, who makes acrobatic catches but needs to improve his blocking.

OFFENSIVE LINE The interior loses three starters who combined for 115 career starts. The key will be Tony Hills, who must become dominant at left tackle. The Longhorns also need a healthy return by right guard Cedric Dockery, who played well for six games last season before being sidelined by a knee injury. Right tackle Adam Ulatoski is big, strong and versatile, and sophomores Chris Hall and Charlie Tanner will battle for the left guard spot. Veteran backup Dallas Griffin could get the call at center.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY With the aggressive Duane Akina entrusted to top billing as co-coordinator alongside former San Francisco 49ers assistant Larry Mac Duff, look for more risk-taking and blitzes than under Gene Chizik, who was too concerned with stopping the run last year. Under Akina and Mac Duff, the Longhorns probably won't be victimized by as many trick plays and deep passes.

FRONT SEVEN The defense suffered over the second half of last season after tackle Derek Lokey broke his leg. Lokey, an inspirational leader and one of the strongest players in college football, has few equals at holding the point of attack. Frank Okam and Roy Miller are run stuffers and part of a terrific three-man inside rotation. Texas loses experience but will get more pass rush out of

new ends Brian Orakpo and Aaron Lewis.

Look for Sergio Kindle, Jared Norton and Rod Muckelroy to provide the athleticism that has been missing at linebacker. Muckelroy would have been dominant last year, but he tore a tendon in his finger and missed 10 games. Add to the mix Rashad Bobino, a small but active playmaker who is coming off a great Alamo Bowl performance, Scott Derry and Robert Killebrew.

SECONDARY A pass defense that rated 99th nationally loses three starters in its secondary. Only reckless free safety Marcus Griffin, the twin brother of departing free safety Michael Griffin, returns after a hot-and-cold season. Speedy Drew Kelson moves from linebacker to strong safety, and Erick Jackson is a safety possibility if he can stay healthy. Deon Beasley was burned in his rare appearances at cornerback last year, but he has talent, as do Chykie Brown and Brandon Foster.

SPECIAL TEAMS Walk-on Ryan Bailey is a reliable field goal kicker, Hunter Lawrence has a big leg for kickoffs and Trevor Gerland averaged 50.3 yards per punt in high school. Look for the explosive Cosby and Shipley to return kicks.

COACHING STAFF Mac Duff, a high-energy coach who plays lots of people to keep them fresh, bolsters the best staff in the Big 12. Akina will get the chance to prove his stuff, and offensive coordinator Greg Davis returns after almost taking the head coaching job at Minnesota.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Jamaal Charles	156	831	5.3	7	
Henry Melton	45	193	4.3	6	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Colt McCoy	217-318-7	2,570		29	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Limas Sweed	46	801	17.0	12	
Quan Cosby	45	525	11.7	2	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Quan Cosby	15	398	26.5	1	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Ryan Bailey	17	18	6	6	35
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Marcus Griffin	54	36	90	2/12	
Rashad Bobino	48	26	74	13/46	
Scott Derry	46	24	70	9/23	
Sacks: Brian Orakpo (4.5)					
Interceptions: Griffin, Ryan Palmer (1)					

Sacks: Brian Orakpo (4.5)
Interceptions: Griffin, Ryan Palmer (1)



Sweed

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	4	Limas Sweed (6-5, 219, Sr.)
	9	Nate Jones (6-2, 195, Sr.)
LT	79	Tony Hills (6-6, 305, Sr.)
	73	J'Marcus Webb (6-8, 310, So.)
LG	71	Chris Hall (6-4, 295, So.)
	75	Steve Moore (6-5, 296, Fr.)
C	67	Dallas Griffin (6-4, 285, Sr.)
	65	Buck Burnette (6-3, 310, Fr.)
RG	55	Cedric Dockery (6-4, 320, Jr.)
	52	Charlie Tanner (6-4, 295, So.)
RT	74	Adam Ulatoski (6-8, 300, So.)
	78	Roy Watts (6-6, 315, Fr.)
TE	16	Jermichael Finley (6-5, 236, So.)
	86	Peter Ullman (6-4, 255, Jr.)
WR	5	Billy Pittman (6-0, 200, Sr.)
	8	Jordan Shipley (6-0, 188, Jr.)
WR	6	Quan Cosby (5-11, 200, Jr.)
	84	George Walker (6-3, 215, Jr.)
QB	12	Colt McCoy (6-3, 205, So.)
	17	Sherrod Harris (6-3, 219, Fr.)
RB	25	Jamaal Charles (6-1, 200, Jr.)
	3	Chris Ogbonnaya (6-1, 225, Jr.)
K	39	Ryan Bailey (6-2, 195, Jr.)
KR	6	Quan Cosby (5-11, 200, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Arkansas State		
9-8	TCU		4-1
9-15	at UCF		
9-22	Rice	52-7	5-0
9-29	Kansas State	42-45	2-3
10-6	• vs. Oklahoma*	28-10	2-3
10-13	at Iowa State	37-14	5-0
10-20	at Baylor	63-31	5-0
10-27	Nebraska	22-20	4-1
11-3	▲ at Oklahoma State	36-10	5-0
11-10	Texas Tech	35-31	4-1
11-23	■ at Texas A&M^	7-12	4-1

*at Dallas ^Friday

■ Toughest game • Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 10th

>The Series Oklahoma (57-39-5): For most of this decade, the Red River Shootout has been THE national game. This year is no different, as each school harbors legit national title hopes. The loser is out.

>The Showdown at Texas A&M: A trip to the BCS title game could be there for the taking if the Longhorns can claim their fourth win in a row in College Station vs. what should be Dennis Franchione's best team yet. How will Texas' defense fare?

>The Smack Plenty of soft serve. The Longhorns don't play a single nonconference game against a team from a BCS league. Shameful. What's it all mean? Texas should have any defensive issues resolved by the time things get serious in November.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	98	Brian Orakpo (6-4, 248, Jr.)
	36	Lamar Houston (6-2, 265, So.)
T	96	Derek Lokey (6-2, 280, Sr.)
	92	Ben Alexander (6-0, 310, So.)
T	97	Frank Okam (6-5, 320, Sr.)
	99	Roy Miller (6-2, 295, Jr.)
E	95	Aaron Lewis (6-4, 260, Jr.)
	37	Henry Melton (6-3, 268, Jr.)
SLB	40	Robert Killebrew (6-2, 230, Sr.)
	2	Sergio Kindle (6-4, 239, So.)
MLB	44	Rashad Bobino (5-11, 228, Jr.)
	11	Jared Norton (6-3, 236, So.)
WLB	33	Scott Derry (6-3, 230, Sr.)
	38	Rodrick Muckelroy (6-2, 230, So.)
CB	7	Deon Beasley (5-10, 170, So.)
	29	Ryan Palmer (5-10, 190, Jr.)
FS	4	Drew Kelson (6-2, 215, Sr.)
	26	Marcus Griffin (6-0, 202, Sr.)
SS	21	Erick Jackson (6-2, 200, Sr.)
	12	Robert Joseph (6-2, 195, So.)
CB	28	Brandon Foster (5-9, 180, Sr.)
	8	Chykie Brown (6-1, 180, Fr.)
P	17	Trevor Gerland (6-2, 290, So.)
PR	6	Quan Cosby (5-11, 200, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

SOONERS

» Oklahoma batted down the hatches and closed spring practices after last year's stunning Fiesta Bowl loss to Boise State—the Sooners' Big 12-leading fifth BCS bowl appearance. The Sooners will play seven home games this season and figure to contend for a national championship if they find stability at quarterback, get by Miami early and snap a two-game losing streak to Texas. The Sooners have the makings of an explosive offense and the league's best secondary.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY An unproven quarterback could cause the Sooners to pass less and hand off more to their stable of strong running backs. They will pound away behind an experienced line and rely on high-percentage throws to a solid cast of wide receivers and tight ends.

SKILL POSITIONS For the third year in a row, the offense will break in a new quarterback. Sam Bradford opened eyes with his scout-team work last fall and has a good understanding of the offense. He will battle junior Joey Halzle, who threw two passes last year, and Keith Nichol, a true freshman. Nichol is a dual-threat quarterback who switched his commitment from Michigan State.

Allen Patrick eases concerns



UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

Quick hits

Stadium: Memorial (grass, 82,112). **Site:** Norman, Okla.

Coach: Bob Stoops (86-19, 8 years)

Offensive coordinator: Kevin Wilson (7th year)

Defensive coordinator: Brent Venables (9th year)

Last league title won: 2006. **Last year not in a bowl:** 1998.

2006 record: 11-3, 7-1/1st Big 12 South

Big 12 championship game: Beat Nebraska, 21-7

Fiesta Bowl: Lost to Boise State, 43-42, OT

over the loss of big-play back Adrian Peterson, who left early for the NFL. Patrick was outstanding when he replaced the injured Peterson last year, and the Sooners won all five games he started. Patrick, a

straight-ahead runner with excellent burst and breakaway speed, figures to be one of the league's top running backs. Tough, strong sophomore Chris Brown will get his carries, too, and a pair of redshirt

freshmen, Mossis Madu and DeMarco Murray, will push for playing time. Murray had a sensational spring, so expect him to get plenty of touches.

The team's best player might be Malcolm Kelly, a strong 6-4 wideout who caught 62 passes last season and 10 in the Big 12 title game against Nebraska. Kelly has the ability to become the conference's premier receiver, but he must get more physical. Juakin Iglesias also will be a star if he improves his routes

2-POINT conversion

GET IT
DONE
OR ELSE

1 QB Sam Bradford. The talented redshirt freshman will have to battle for the job, but he's a terrific athlete who amazed coaches with his grasp of the offense and work on the scout team last year.

2 LB Mike Reed. The nation's top-rated junior college linebacker must replace Zach Latimer and plug the middle. He has the makeup and size—maybe too much at 250 pounds—but will need to adjust quickly.

A Big 12 coach says ...

This was the most talented team we played last year. I was struck by how big and fast they were at receiver and in the secondary. All of their guys are 6-1, 6-2, and 195 or 200 pounds. They are good athletes with speed who can make big plays or keep you from getting any. ... Their offensive line is big and physical. If you let them lock on you, they can control you and overwhelm you. ... The defensive line doesn't have a lot of 300-pound guys, but they have good athletes who can chase you.

and consistency, and Murray and Madu could be dangerous working out of the slot. Tight ends Jermaine Gresham and Joe Jon Finley are big, reliable targets.

OFFENSIVE LINE Center Jon Cooper anchors the biggest and best front wall in the league, and mammoth guard George Robinson has All-American potential if his pass protection reaches the level of his run-blocking. Tackle Brannndon Braxton should be ready after sitting out spring practice with a broken leg. Look for junior-college tackle Phil Loadholt to make good use of quick feet and 360 pounds in his pursuit of the only starting job available.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Few teams attack like the Sooners. Fiery coordinator Brent Venables has defensive backs who can tackle and cover, and he will emphasize speed and send blitzers any time and in any situation.

FRONT SEVEN An inexperienced defensive front will depend on tackle DeMarcus Granger, who has playmaker potential despite an inconsistent 2006 performance. Redshirt freshman tackles Gerald McCoy and Adrian Taylor, both big-time recruits, eventually will make plays, too. Alonzo Dotson showed some potential late last year at the otherwise depleted end position.

The Sooners always seem to come up with tough, active linebackers. They're hoping junior college All-American Mike Reed fills a void in a unit missing two starters, and that promising

Ryan Reynolds picks up where he left off before a knee injury sidelined him for the 2006 season. Curtis Lofton might be the hardest hitter in the league, and Lewis Baker and Demarrio Pleasant bring plenty of experience. True freshman Austin Box also has opened some eyes.

SECONDARY No team has a more seasoned secondary. The Sooners have 10 players with experience, but they must be more physical and tackle better in space. The centerpiece figures to be Reggie Smith, who will line up at either strong safety or cornerback, where he worked in the spring. Marcus Walker and Lendy Holmes have become solid cover corners, and coaches have high hopes for Quinton Carter, who can deliver a blow. If anyone slips, free safeties Nic Harris and Darien Williams both have starting experience.

SPECIAL TEAMS Garrett Hartley is one of the best kickers in the nation. He missed only one of his 20 field-goal tries last season—a block by Oregon that cost the Sooners a win. Hartley had 31 touchbacks on kickoffs. Michael Cohen and Mike Knall will compete for the punting job. Punt returner Smith and kick returner Iglesias are always threats to score.

COACHING STAFF Bob Stoops' halo has slipped a bit. But it's hard to find fault with the way the hard-driving, aggressive-minded coach and his staff brought the Sooners back from last season's 2-3 start: eight straight wins and the Big 12 championship.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Allen Patrick	169	761	4.5	4	
Chris Brown	70	343	4.9	6	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Joey Halzle	1-2-0	15	0		
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Malcolm Kelly	62	993	16.0	10	
Juaquin Iglesias	41	514	12.5	2	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Jauquin Iglesias	14	363	25.9	1	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Garrett Hartley	49	50	19	20	106
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Nic Harris	40	28	68	7/42	
Darien Williams	40	27	67	4.5/24	
Lendy Holmes	24	18	42	6/19	
Sacks: Steven Coleman (3)					
Interceptions: Harris (4)					

Sacks: Steven Coleman (3)
Interceptions: Harris (4)



Patrick

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	4	Malcolm Kelly (6-4, 217, Jr.)
	80	Adron Tennell (6-4, 184, So.)
LT	79	Phil Loadholt (6-8, 360, Jr.)
	70	Cory Brandon (6-7, 295, Fr.)
LG	72	George Robinson (6-5, 330, Jr.)
	77	Sherrone Moore (6-3, 297, Sr.)
C	50	Jon Cooper (6-2, 285, Jr.)
	75	Chase Beeler (6-3, 276, So.)
RG	74	Brian Simmons (6-4, 293, So.)
	73	Brandon Walker (6-3, 306, Jr.)
RT	76	Brannndon Braxton (6-6, 312, Jr.)
	71	Trent Williams (6-5, 321, So.)
TE	19	Joe Jon Finley (6-6, 260, Sr.)
	18	Jermaine Gresham (6-6, 250, So.)
WR	1	Manuel Johnson (5-11, 177, Jr.)
	8	Brandon Caleb (6-1, 196, So.)
WR	9	Juaquin Iglesias (6-1, 201, Jr.)
	81	Fred Strong (6-1, 197, Jr.)
QB	15	Joey Halzle (6-3, 198, Jr.)
	14	Sam Bradford (6-5, 197, Fr.)
RB	23	Allen Patrick (6-0, 191, Sr.)
	29	Chris Brown (5-10, 190, So.)
K	10	Garrett Hartley (5-9, 198, Sr.)
KR	3	Reggie Smith (6-1, 197, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	North Texas		5-0
9-8	■ Miami		2-3
9-15	Utah State		3-0
9-21	at Tulsa*		4-1
9-29	at Colorado	24-3	5-0
10-6	● vs. Texas^	10-28	3-2
10-13	Missouri	26-10	4-1
10-20	at Iowa State	34-9	5-0
11-3	Texas A&M	17-16	4-1
11-10	Baylor	36-10	5-0
11-17	at Texas Tech	34-24	4-1
11-24	▲ Oklahoma State	27-21	4-1

*Friday ^at Dallas

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to be upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 8th

>The Series Texas (39-57-5): Given the malice of the Big 12 North, this has become the league championship game. It's time for the Sooners to end a two-game skid in the Red River Shootout after winning five in a row.

>The Showdown vs. Oklahoma State: The Cowboys are talking big. Time for the Sooners to remind the Pokes of their second-class citizenship in the state.

>The Smack Built for success. Save for a visit to Texas Tech, all of the heavy lifting will be done at home or a neutral site. Go ahead and dream big. Circle the Miami game. The teams met three times in the 1980s—and the Canes won them all, including a 1985 visit to Norman.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	91	Alonzo Dotson (6-4, 262, Sr.)
	33	Auston English (6-3, 257, So.)
T	96	DeMarcus Granger (6-3, 300, So.)
	93	Gerald McCoy (6-4, 289, Fr.)
T	97	Cory Bennett (6-2, 278, Jr.)
	90	Steven Coleman (6-4, 299, Sr.)
E	98	John Williams (6-5, 259, Sr.)
	33	Auston English (6-3, 257, So.)
SLB	16	Lewis Baker (6-2, 210, Sr.)
	51	Demarrio Pleasant (6-2, 231, Sr.)
MLB	10	Mike Reed (6-1, 250, Jr.)
	8	Ryan Reynolds (6-1, 237, So.)
WLB	40	Curtis Lofton (6-0, 235, Jr.)
	48	Brandon Crow (6-2, 220, Fr.)
CB	24	Marcus Walker (5-11, 192, Sr.)
	11	Lendy Holmes (6-1, 196, Jr.)
FS	5	Nic Harris (6-3, 226, Jr.)
	41	Darien Williams (6-0, 197, Sr.)
SS	25	D.J. Wolfe (6-0, 196, Sr.)
	22	Keenan Clayton (6-1, 210, So.)
CB	3	Reggie Smith (6-1, 197, Jr.)
	15	Dominique Franks (5-11, 183, Fr.)
P	31	Michael Cohen (6-0, 205, Sr.)
PR	3	Reggie Smith (6-1, 197, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

RED RAIDERS

» **T**exas Tech quietly has emerged as one of the top teams in the Big 12 and one of the most consistent in the nation. The Red Raiders have played in seven straight bowls and posted wins in four of the last five. The same offensive magic that inspired that success will be on display in 2007 with a veteran quarterback, although rebuilt offensive and defensive fronts could slow the momentum.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Tech passes to set up more passes in Mike Leach's spread offense; that won't change after five consecutive NCAA passing titles. This offense is all about ball distribution, and the top five receivers can come from five different skill positions, including the running back and H-back. The running back gets as many catches as he does carries, and the quarterback picks apart defenses with reads and quick throws.

SKILL POSITIONS In his first season as a starter, Graham Harrell threw for 4,555 yards and 38 touchdowns. He also beat Texas A&M on a final-second touchdown pass and brought his team back from a 31-point third-quarter deficit to beat Minnesota in the Insight Bowl. Harrell, who completed 66.8 percent of his passes, did lose his two most productive targets. Versatile Danny Amendola, who also returns punts, is back, but Harrell will have to count on such unproven receivers as Michael Crabtree, converted running back Edward Britton, speedy Grant Walker and his equally fast brother, Todd Walker. There is no better all-purpose back in the league than Shannon Woods, who led all ball-carriers with 75 catches, 11 of them in a loss to Missouri.

Quick hits

Stadium: Jones AT&T (artificial, 52,882).
Site: Lubbock, Texas.
Coach: Mike Leach

(56-33, 7 years)
Offensive coordinator: Dana Holgorsen (4th year, 8th at school)
Defensive coordinator: Lyle Setencich (5th year)
Last league title won: 1994 (SWC, tie).
Last year not in a bowl: 1999.
2006 record: 8-5, 4-4/4th Big 12 South.
Insight Bowl: Beat Minnesota, 44-41, 2OT.



2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 WR Michael Crabtree. This big, physical—and unproven—redshirt freshman could be Graham Harrell's next go-to receiver. The former high school quarterback impressed observers during spring practices.

2 MLB Paul Williams. A contributor as a part-time starter, Williams will be handed the keys to the linebacking corps. He has won the coaches' trust and will be asked to provide leadership for a very thin front seven.

A Big 12 coach says ...

They have a lot of work to do at receiver. That probably has been their most complete group of skill players recently. They caught a bunch of balls and played a lot. And part of that offense is knowing what to do and where the spaces are. At least QB **Graham Harrell** is back. ... They have to replace a lot of guys on the offensive line. That's gonna be tough. ... On defense, they have gone away from that all-out blitzing stuff from three or four years ago to more of a softer, make-you-beat-team style. That's a good philosophy.

OFFENSIVE LINE Four starters are gone from the rock-solid unit that allowed only 16 sacks a year ago. Left guard Louis Vasquez has all-conference talent in a potentially huge line that projects to average 325 pounds. Harrell might need a stepladder to see over returnee Vasquez, guard Brandon Carter and right tackle Rylan Reed, all of whom are 6-6, and left tackle Marlon Winn, who is 6-5. Center Shawn Byrnes is the runt of the litter at 6-3 and 303.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Lyle Setencich directs this unit with a smack-'em and run attitude. He wants his players to hit early, hard and often. The safeties are free to hang around the line and cause trouble as linebackers drop into coverage. Tech wants pressure with minimal blitzing and to stop sustained drives.

FRONT SEVEN With only seven scholarship players returning to the line, there's a sense of urgency. Brandon Williams provides some hope as an athletic speed rusher off the edge. So does Jake Ratliff, who dominated last season after moving from the interior to end. Nose tackle Brian Jones returns after sitting out 2006 with an injury and will compete inside with Richard Jones and Rajon Henley.

Hard-hitting Kellen Tillman, a sixth-year senior, is the only linebacker with much experience. Paul Williams has played enough to grasp the defense, but the position could be problematic.

SECONDARY Three-fourths of the Big 12's top-ranked pass defense is back. Joe Garcia

and Darcel McBath are two of the league's more physical safeties and punishing tacklers. Garcia crowds the line, which is why he had 87 tackles. McBath had 75 stops and three interceptions. Right cornerback Chris Parker is a mentally tough defender who plays through injuries and can shut down top receivers. Jamar Wall has experience on the left side, but junior college transfer De'Shon Sanders is highly regarded, and redshirt freshman Laron Moore could compete for a starting job.

SPECIAL TEAMS Alex Trlica doesn't have great range, but he did kick a career-long 52-yard field goal to send Tech's bowl game into overtime. He also has converted 166 consecutive extra-point attempts, an NCAA record. Freshman Jonathan LaCour will get every opportunity to beat out Grant Berg as the replacement for dependable four-year punter Alex Reyes. Look for Amendola to rank among the Big 12's premier punt returners.

COACHING STAFF Leach is one of the game's most colorful and candid head coaches—and one of it's most consistent. His teams are as capable of blowing big leads, like the 21-0 edge it had over Texas, as overcoming them, as his Red Raiders did in their double-overtime bowl win over Minnesota. He leads an underrated staff that includes 24-year-old wide receivers coach Lincoln Riley, a former walk-on quarterback and Leach protege. Co-offensive coordinator Sonny Dykes, who also coached receivers, left to run the offense at Arizona.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Shannon Woods	152	926	6.1	10	
Baron Batch	9	43	4.8	1	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD		
Graham Harrell	412-617-11	4,555	38		
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Shannon Woods	75	572	7.6	2	
Danny Amendola	48	487	10.1	5	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Danny Amendola	41	377	9.2	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Alex Trlica	51	51	15	21	96
Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Joe Garcia	49	38	87	3/7	
Darcel McBeth	35	40	75	0.5/1	
Chris Parker	37	13	50		

Sacks: Brandon Williams (3.5)

Interceptions: McBath (3)

Woods



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	12	Eric Morris (5-8, 171, Jr.)
	85	Kelly Hildebrandt (5-9, 174, Sr.)
LT	67	Marlon Winn (6-5, 329, So.)
	77	Chris Olson (6-5, 299, Fr.)
LG	65	Louis Vasquez (6-6, 351, Jr.)
	77	Chris Olson (6-5, 299, Fr.)
C	51	Shawn Byrnes (6-3, 303, So.)
	53	Justin Keown* (6-4, 280, Fr.)
RG	71	Stephen Hamby (6-3, 290, Jr.)
	60	Brandon Carter (6-6, 356, So.)
RT	74	Rylan Reed (6-7, 290, Jr.)
	61	Andrew Johnson (6-4, 308, So.)
WR	20	Danny Amendola (5-11, 181, Sr.)
	19	Grant Walker (6-0, 185, Sr.)
WR	86	L.A. Reed (6-2, 201, Jr.)
	27	Edward Britton (6-1, 173, So.)
WR	5	Michael Crabtree (6-3, 222, Fr.)
	83	Lyle Leong* (6-0, 168, Fr.)
QB	6	Graham Harrell (6-2, 196, Jr.)
	15	Taylor Potts (6-4, 219, Fr.)
RB	21	Kobey Lewis (5-6, 173, So.)
	2	Shannon Woods (5-11, 195, Jr.)
K	30	Alex Trlica (5-11, 171, Sr.)
KR	12	Eric Morris (5-8, 171, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-3	at SMU*	35-3	5-0
9-8	UTEP	38-35, OT	4-1
9-15	at Rice		3-2
9-22	at Oklahoma State	30-24	3-2
9-29	Northwestern State		
10-6	Iowa State	42-26	4-1
10-13	• Texas A&M	31-27	4-1
10-20	at Missouri	21-38	1-4
10-27	Colorado	6-30	2-3
11-3	at Baylor	55-21	5-0
11-10	■ at Texas	31-35	1-4
11-17	▲ Oklahoma	24-34	1-4

*Monday

■ Toughest game • Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 11th

>The Series Texas A&M (29-35-1): The Red Raiders have passed the Aggies in the Big 12 pecking order. To stay there, Tech must protect its turf. Will its rebuilt offense be up to the test?

>The Showdown vs. Oklahoma: The Red Raiders have become a minor pain to the Sooners, "stealing" a win the last time OU visited Lubbock.

>The Smack Could Tech be wrecked? The nonconference schedule is built for a program in transition. It's all about finding a rhythm vs. no foes from a BCS conference. But opening with three of four on the road could result in some embarrassments. If that doesn't do it, the season-ending 1-2 punch of Texas and Oklahoma could.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	98	Jake Ratliff (6-6, 238, Jr.)
	89	Tyler Yenzler (6-5, 237, Sr.)
NT	60	Rajon Henley (6-3, 279, So.)
	90	Brian Jones (6-0, 294, So.)
T	97	Richard Jones (6-1, 293, So.)
	86	Cliff Stoffers (6-0, 251, Fr.)
E	84	Brandon Williams (6-4, 244, So.)
	89	Tyler Yenzler (6-5, 237, Sr.)
SLB	56	Kellen Tillman (6-1, 241, Sr.)
	59	Ty Linder (6-2, 210, Sr.)
MLB	48	Paul Williams (6-1, 219, Sr.)
	52	Victor Hunter (5-10, 258, So.)
WLB	54	Chad Hill (6-1, 220, Sr.)
	39	Marlon Williams (6-0, 211, So.)
CB	3	Jamar Wall (5-11, 199, So.)
	11	De'Shon Sanders (6-1, 184, Jr.)
FS	7	Darcel McBath (6-1, 201, Jr.)
	23	Anthony Hines (6-2, 216, Jr.)
SS	49	Joe Garcia (6-2, 215, Sr.)
	24	Lance Fuller (6-1, 216, Jr.)
CB	17	Chris Parker (5-11, 177, Sr.)
	1	Marcus Bunton (5-8, 192, Jr.)
P	82	Grant Berg (6-5, 201, Jr.)
PR	20	Danny Amendola (5-11, 181, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

AGGIES

This year is critical for Dennis Franchione, who is 25-23, including two ugly bowl losses, over the past four seasons. A&M must improve and make more use of the passing game, upgrade its front seven on defense, learn how to close out games and steal a win or two in road games at Miami, Texas Tech, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Missouri. Seven wins likely wouldn't save coach Fran.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY A&M has developed into one of college football's best running attacks and a strong option team. It takes few chances, and tries to minimize turnovers and pound defenses into submission, although it will spread opponents out as well. Expect more passing this fall.

SKILL POSITIONS Stephen McGee provides quality leadership and might be the most physical quarterback in the country; he will run over a linebacker. He rarely throws an interception—he had just two in 313 passing attempts last season—but never has been trusted to carry the offense with his throwing. He must improve on making all his reads before scrambling. He has two dynamic tight ends in Martellus Bennett and Joey Thomas. Bennett, big and athletic enough to have played basketball for A&M, has yet to have the breakout year he is capable of. Thomas has

sure hands. Pierre Brown needs a big year at wideout to go with the explosive Kerry Franks, Earvin Taylor and Howard Morrow.

No team has a better running back duo than A&M's 263-pound Jorvorskie Lane, who scored a school-record 19 rushing touchdowns last season, and speedy Mike Goodson, who aver-



McGee

ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

Quick hits

Stadium: Kyle Field (grass, 82,600)
Site: College Station, Texas
Coach: Dennis Franchione (25-23, 4 years; 100-78 overall, 15 years)

Offensive coordinator: Les Koenning (5th year, 8th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Gary Darnell (2nd year)

Last league title won: 1998. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2005.

2006 record: 9-4, 5-3/3rd Big 12 South

Holiday Bowl: Lost to California, 45-10

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 WR Pierre Brown. A&M lost its top two wideouts and needs a reliable target to go with Earvin Taylor. The physical Brown never has caught more than two passes in a game but has the talent to be a top receiver.

2 LB Matt Featherston. The sophomore must make a big-time impact at linebacker, where A&M has lacked an athletic playmaker. He has the size and skills needed to dominate and carry on the Wrecking Crew tradition.

A Big 12 coach says ...

They do a lot of things that make it tough on defenses. They run a couple of different options, and you have to be ready for trick plays. There are questions at receiver. We'll see how that plays out. ... The defense improved last year. They are more aggressive, but they need improvement on the back end to keep going. ... RB **Mike Goodson** is one of the top backs in the league. QB **Stephen McGee** is a good, tough competitor. ... TE **Martellus Bennett** has the tools to be whatever he wants to be. Some games he does it, others he doesn't.

aged 6.7 yards per carry as a freshman. Expect special packages for quarterback Jerrod Johnson—a redshirt freshman whose big build, athleticism and overpowering style of play resemble those of Vince Young—and running back Cornell Tarrant—a deep threat.

OFFENSIVE LINE The Aggies are solid and versatile here. As a unit, the line allowed just 19 sacks in 13 games last season and blocked well enough for the offense to convert 50.3 percent of its third downs and control the clock. Guard Kirk Elder and center Cody Wallace have few peers in the league. Tackles Yemi Babalola and Corey Clark use good footwork and have 39 starts between them, and Chris Yoder, who shared a guard spot last season with the departed Grant Dickey, should win that spot.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The defense improved in coordinator Gary Darnell's first season after a disastrous 2005, but Darnell lacks the playmakers at linebacker and experience in the secondary to make this a premier group. He uses three safeties and mostly zone coverage and wants to be physical but add speed at the same time.

FRONT SEVEN End Chris Harrington will return from shoulder surgery this fall, and he has been the team's only reliable pass rusher with 7½ sacks last season. Cyril Obiozor, Henry Smith and Michael Bennett should help there. Tackle Red Bryant disappointed after two solid years last season; knee surgery sidelined

him this spring. Kellen Heard is a strong run stuffer. Once known for its linebackers, A&M no longer spits out havoc-wreaking players at the position. Mark Dodge is a huge effort guy but is slow. Misi Tupe runs well but is undersized. A&M is expecting much from Matt Featherston, a physically imposing specimen, and huge Anthony Lewis and Nick LaMantia.

SECONDARY Once a problem area, the team improved with better athletes and more speed—even though corner Jordan Peterson frequently got burned as a freshman. The staff wishes the extremely athletic Arkeith Brown would challenge corner Danny Gorrer more. Free safety Devin Gregg has good skills, and beefed-up Jordan Pugh was shifted from cornerback to weak safety to take advantage of his hitting ability. Alton Dixon brings the lumber as well and should move into the vacant strong safety slot.

SPECIAL TEAMS The kicking game should be a strength. Justin Brantly had 21 punts go more than 50 yards last season. Matt Szymanski has a big leg, too; the sophomore kicker had 25 touchbacks on 69 kickoffs. He also was 13-of-13 on extra points. Franks had a 99-yard kickoff return last year and can go the distance.

COACHING STAFF Franchione can be tough on his staff, but proven offensive coordinator Les Koenning and Darnell can handle it. Three assistants—Darnell, receivers coach Bob DeBesse and O-line coach Jim Bob Helduser—have college head coaching experience.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Mike Goodson	127	847	6.7	4
Jorvorskie Lane	166	725	4.4	19

Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD
Stephen McGee	194-313-2	2,295	12

Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Martellus Bennett	38	497	13.1	3
Earvin Taylor	19	160	8.4	0

Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Kerry Franks	17	463	27.2	1

Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Matt Szymanski	13	13	2	5	19

Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.
Devin Gregg	23	41	64	0.5/1
Chris Harrington	30	29	59	11.5/64
Misi Tupe	17	37	54	4/23

Sacks: Harrington (7.5)

Interceptions: Japhus Brown, Mark Dodge, Gregg, Jordan Peterson (2)



Goodson

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	8	Kerry Franks (5-11, 195, Sr.)
	6	Pierre Brown (6-2, 200, Jr.)
T	71	Yemi Babalola (6-4, 308, Jr.)
	75	Travis Schneider (6-8, 297, Jr.)
G	64	Kirk Elder (6-5, 307, Sr.)
	74	Lee Grimes (6-6, 325, So.)
C	70	Cody Wallace (6-4, 294, Sr.)
	63	Kevin Matthews (6-4, 302, So.)
G	51	Chris Yoder (6-3, 303, Sr.)
	76	Michael Shumard (6-5, 307, So.)
T	54	Corey Clark (6-6, 309, Sr.)
	79	Robbie Frost (6-6, 305, So.)
TE	13	Martellus Bennett (6-7, 253, Jr.)
	81	Joey Thomas (6-5, 250, Sr.)
WR	2	Earvin Taylor (6-3, 228, Sr.)
	5	Howard Morrow (6-0, 211, Jr.)
QB	7	Stephen McGee (6-3, 215, Jr.)
	1	Jerrod Johnson (6-6, 223, Fr.)
RB	11	Jorvorskie Lane (6-0, 263, Jr.)
	3	Mike Goodson (6-0, 197, So.)
FB	24	Chris Alexander (5-11, 248, Sr.)
	43	Jodie Richardson (6-0, 237, So.)
K	7	Matt Szymanski (6-1, 193, So.)
KR	8	Kerry Franks (5-11, 195, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Montana State		
9-8	Fresno State		
9-15	La.-Monroe		
9-20	at Miami*		1-0
9-29	Baylor	31-21	4-1
10-6	• Oklahoma State	34-33, OT	3-2
10-13	at Texas Tech	27-31	1-4
10-20	at Nebraska	27-28	1-4
10-27	Kansas	21-18	5-0
11-3	• at Oklahoma	16-17	1-4
11-10	at Missouri	25-19	3-2
11-23	• Texas^	12-7	1-4

*Thursday ^Friday

■ Toughest game • Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 4th

>The Series Texas (35-73-5): This is the Aggies' measuring stick—and they've come up way short. The defense must show it has regained its "Wrecking Crew" moniker vs. what should be a strong Texas offense.

>The Showdown at Texas Tech: Before catching the Longhorns, the Aggies have to worry about catching the Red Raiders. This may be the year for A&M to get its first win in Lubbock since 1993 (0-6).

>The Smack Time to shine: A visit to Miami is timed perfectly because the Canes are in transition. The season will be defined by four very losable league road games before Texas comes to College Station for the finale. Memo to A&M: It's time to halt a three-game home losing skid to Texas.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	92	Chris Harrington (6-5, 265, Sr.)
	86	Amos Gbunlee (6-5, 250, Jr.)
T	85	Red Bryant (6-5, 324, Sr.)
	84	Chris Smith (6-4, 260, Jr.)
T	95	Henry Smith (6-3, 307, Sr.)
	91	Kellen Heard (6-6, 330, So.)
E	49	Cyril Obiozor (6-5, 257, Jr.)
	11	Michael Bennett (6-4, 265, Jr.)
SLB	50	Mark Dodge (6-2, 222, Sr.)
	46	Matt Featherston (6-3, 243, So.)
MLB	37	Misi Tupe (5-10, 253, Sr.)
	36	Anthony Lewis (6-2, 249, So.)
S	25	Jordan Pugh (6-0, 190, So.)
	15	Kenny Brown (6-2, 207, Fr.)
CB	4	Danny Gorrer (6-0, 181, Jr.)
	18	Arkeith Brown (6-0, 177, Jr.)
FS	26	Devin Gregg (6-0, 196, Jr.)
	41	DeMaurier Thompson (6-1, 185, Fr.)
SS	9	Alton Dixon (5-11, 207, So.)
	30	Chevar Bryson (6-0, 186, So.)
CB	27	Jordan Peterson (5-10, 188, So.)
	13	Marquis Carpenter (6-0, 179, Sr.)
P	16	Justin Brantly (6-4, 233, Jr.)
PR	27	Jordan Peterson (5-10, 188, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman



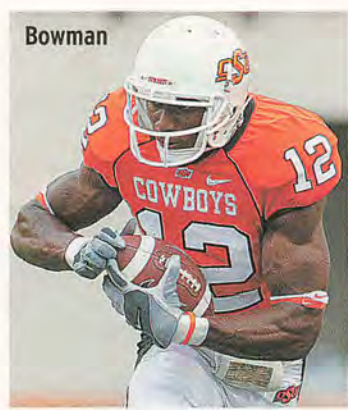
COWBOYS

SN projection **5th, 7-5, Independence Bowl** National rank **38**

Oklahoma State isn't ready to overtake Oklahoma or Texas but could finish as high as third in the Big 12 South. A dynamic quarterback, wide receiver and running back will combine with an improved secondary and linebacking crew to propel the Cowboys to their fifth bowl in six years. Improving a defense that gave up 30 or more points in seven games is key.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Only Oklahoma State and Boise State averaged more than 200 yards passing and rushing last season, and that balance makes this offense one of the most dangerous in the nation. The Cowboys can run out of the spread or the I-formation to get their fastest players in space.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL The Cowboys had four 500-yard rushers last season, including quarterback Bobby Reid. The talented junior has quick feet and a big arm; he also passed



Bowman

OKLAHOMA STATE

for 2,266 yards and 24 touchdowns. When not throwing, Reid can hand off to Dantrell Savage, who emerged as the go-to back by topping 100 yards in five of his last seven games. The compact Savage averaged 6.5 yards per carry, but backup Keith Toston is even faster. Wideout Adarius Bowman is as good as it gets: strong, physical and capable of going the distance, which he did 12 times last year. To replace D'Juan Woods, the Cowboys will look to Tommy Devereaux, Anthony Parks, Jeremy Broadway and speedy freshman Desmond Bryant. The line is undersized, but center David Washington and right tackle David Koenig are two of the best in the Big 12.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY New coordinator Tim Beckman, who coached Ohio State cornerbacks in last year's national title game, will look for pressure on the quarterback and big hitters who can create havoc and turnovers.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Nathan Peterson and Marque Fountain combined for 12 1/2

Quick hits

Stadium: Boone Pickens (artificial, 44,700)
Site: Stillwater, Okla.
Coach: Mike Gundy (11-13, 2 years, 12 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Larry Fedora (3rd year)
Defensive coordinator: Tim Beckman (1st year)

Last league title won: 1976 (Big Eight, tie). **Last year not in a bowl:** 2005.
2006 record: 7-6, 3-5/T5th Big 12 South
Independence Bowl: Beat Alabama, 34-31
Returning leaders: Rushing—Dantrell Savage (126 att., 820 yards, 8 TDs). Passing—Bobby Reid (148-267-11, 2,266 yards, 24 TDs). Receiving—Adarius Bowman (60 rec., 1,181 yards, 12 TDs).

sacks last season and might be the top end duo in the Big 12. Jeray Chatham and Maurice Cummings show promise inside, but stopping the run is a concern. The team is loaded at linebacker with Patrick Lavine, Jeremy Nethon and Rodrick Johnson, who also could play end. The staff moved safety Donovan Woods to linebacker to take advantage of his athletic ability. The secondary is well fortified with experienced cornerbacks Jacob

Lacey and Martel Van Zant.
SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Jason Ricks has two field goals from beyond 50 yards and has never missed inside 40 yards. Matt Fodge is a second-team All-American punter, and Perrish Cox had six returns to set up scores last season.
COACHING STAFF Mike Gundy is a disciplinarian. Larry Fedora is one of the most innovative offensive coordinators in the country. Joe DeForest has few peers as special teams coach.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	83	Artrell Woods (6-1, 185, So.)
	10	Tommy Devereaux (6-0, 185, Sr.)
LT	76	Russell Okung (6-5, 290, So.)
	60	Brady Bond (6-6, 290, So.)
LG	54	Andrew Lewis (6-5, 295, So.)
	78	Michael Booker (6-3, 310, Fr.)
C	63	David Washington (6-3, 305, Jr.)
	52	Andrew Lawrence (6-4, 305, So.)
RG	65	Steve Denning (6-5, 300, Jr.)
	77	Noah Franklin (6-5, 310, So.)
RT	61	David Koenig (6-5, 290, Sr.)
	57	Jacob Secrest (6-5, 295, Fr.)
TE	87	Brandon Pettigrew (6-6, 260, Jr.)
	88	Pascal Smith (6-5, 260, Sr.)
WR	12	Adarius Bowman (6-4, 220, Sr.)
	15	Seth Newton (6-3, 195, Jr.)
QB	14	Bobby Reid (6-3, 235, Jr.)
	11	Zac Robinson (6-3, 205, So.)
RB	22	Dantrell Savage (5-9, 195, Sr.)
	5	Keith Toston (6-1, 210, So.)
FB	33	John Johnson (6-1, 255, Jr.)
	48	Zach Carter (6-1, 225, Sr.)
K	85	Jason Ricks (6-2, 200, Jr.)
KR	4	Perrish Cox (6-1, 185, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
LE	97	Marque Fountain (6-2, 260, Sr.)
	98	Derek Burton (6-5, 265, So.)
NT	96	Jeray Chatham (6-3, 280, Jr.)
	92	Tonga Tea (6-0, 320, Jr.)
T	56	Maurice Cummings (6-4, 265, Sr.)
	93	Jonathan Lewis (6-2, 290, So.)
E	13	Nathan Peterson (6-2, 240, Sr.)
	2	Rodrick Johnson (6-3, 250, Sr.)
WLB	19	Jeremy Nethon (6-0, 225, Sr.)
	42	Justin Gent (6-2, 235, Fr.)
MLB	4	Patrick Lavine (6-3, 220, So.)
	44	Chris Collins (6-2, 240, So.)
SLB	8	Donovan Woods (6-2, 225, Sr.)
	41	Orlie Lemon (6-1, 225, So.)
CB	17	Jacoby Lacey (5-11, 175, Jr.)
	4	Perrish Cox (6-1, 185, So.)
FS	26	Quenton Moore (5-11, 185, Jr.)
	25	Clint Coe (6-2, 195, Sr.)
SS	6	Ricky Price (6-1, 190, Jr.)
	20	Andre Sexton (6-1, 210, So.)
CB	7	Martel Van Zant (6-1, 210, Sr.)
	27	Calvin Mickens (6-2, 200, Jr.)
P	18	Matt Fodge (6-1, 195, Jr.)
PR	4	Perrish Cox (6-1, 185, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at Georgia	
9-8	Florida Atlantic	48-8
9-14	at Troy*	
9-22	• Texas Tech	24-30
9-29	Sam Houston State	
10-6	at Texas A&M	33-34, OT
10-13	at Nebraska	41-29
10-20	Kansas State	27-31
11-3	▲ Texas	10-36
11-10	Kansas	42-32
11-17	at Baylor	66-24
11-24	■ at Oklahoma	21-27

*Friday

■ Toughest game • Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 3rd

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 WR Tommy Devereaux. He has plenty of speed and has been terrific on special teams. But the Cowboys need him to be more than a decoy to draw attention away from fellow wideout Adarius Bowman.

2 NT Jeray Chatham. Filling this position void will be one of the team's biggest challenges. Chatham, a 280-pound junior who played well in key games against Oklahoma and Alabama last year, needs to be a playmaker.

BAYLOR BEARS

SN projection **6th, 4-8**

National rank **98**

Expect the drought—Baylor hasn't been to a bowl since 1994—to continue, especially considering the schedule includes games with eight teams who played in bowls last season. Change among offensive skill players, the secondary, special teams and the coaches likely will mean another early offseason.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Guy Morriss switched to the spread offense—with only modest success. The new quarterback, running back and receivers will need to pick up the system quickly if the Bears have any hope of improving it. They

must devote some attention to the running game, which averaged 40.2 yards a game last season, worst in the nation.



Pawelek

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	21	Thomas White (6-2, 206, Jr.)
	4	David Gettis (6-4, 206, So.)
LT	72	Jason Smith (6-5, 288, Jr.)
	78	Chris Griesenbeck (6-3, 267, So.)
LG	71	Dan Gay (6-5, 311, Jr.)
	60	Sam Sledge (6-2, 270, So.)
C	55	J.D. Walton (6-2, 322, So.)
	53	Mike Miller (6-3, 273, Sr.)
RG	70	Chad Smith (6-6, 280, Sr.)
	61	James Barnard (6-4, 291, So.)
RT	74	Thad Boatner (6-7, 289, So.)
	75	Jordan Hearvey (6-4, 305, So.)
WR	82	Justin Akers (6-5, 237, So.)
	80	Jordan Adams (6-4, 247, Sr.)
WR	13	Ernest Smith (6-3, 186, So.)
	3	Mikail Baker (6-0, 186, Jr.)
WR	85	Justin Fenty (5-10, 174, So.)
	24	Carl Sims (5-10, 182, Jr.)
QB	7	Michael Machen (6-6, 237, Sr.)
	17	John David Weed (6-4, 214, Jr.)
RB	2	Brandon Whitaker (5-10, 197, Sr.)
	32	Jay Finley (5-11, 195, Fr.)
K	20	Caleb Allen (6-0, 169, Jr.)
KR	3	Mikail Baker (6-0, 186, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	88	Jason Lamb (6-6, 253, So.)
	51	Adam Geib (6-5, 250, Jr.)
T	91	Vincent Rhodes (6-2, 302, Jr.)
	95	Damien Taylor (6-3, 271, So.)
NT	97	Trey Bryant (6-3, 310, So.)
	92	Connor Redfearn (6-2, 287, Sr.)
E	57	Geoff Nelson (6-2, 260, Sr.)
	10	Jameon Hardeman (6-1, 262, Fr.)
MLB	41	Joe Pawelek (6-2, 231, So.)
	34	Ben Hixson (6-2, 225, Jr.)
WLB	44	Nick Moore (6-1, 226, Sr.)
	8	Antonio Jones (6-3, 226, So.)
S	4	Jeremy Williams (5-10, 204, So.)
	9	Brandon Stiggers (6-0, 199, Sr.)
CB	2	Josh Bell (6-0, 168, Sr.)
	7	Ralph Rodriguez (5-10, 181, Sr.)
FS	21	Jordan Lake (6-2, 209, So.)
	11	Marlon Price (6-2, 193, Jr.)
SS	1	Dwain Crawford (6-0, 208, Jr.)
	12	Jake LaMar (6-0, 188, Jr.)
CB	20	Alton Widemon (5-11, 178, Sr.)
	27	Dominique Criss (5-9, 189, Fr.)
P	20	Caleb Allen (6-0, 169, Jr.)
PR	2	Brandon Whitaker (5-10, 197, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Floyd Casey (artificial, 50,000). **Site:** Waco, Texas.
Coach: Guy Morriss (15-31, 4 years; 24-35 overall, 6 years)
Offensive coordinator: Lee Hays (2nd year)
Defensive coordinator: Larry Hoefer (1st year, 5th at school)

Last league title won: 1994 (SWC, tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 1994.

2006 record: 4-8, 3-5/T5th Big 12 South

Returning leaders: Rushing—Brandon Whitaker (41 att., 158 yards, 1 TD).
 Passing—Blake Szymanski (64-121-7, 689 yards, 4 TDs). Receiving—Thomas White (26 rec., 372 yards, 2 TDs).

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Michael Machen, a Kent State grad who threw for 2,078 yards in 2005, has a year of eligibility left and is expected to emerge from a five-man competition at quarterback. Running back Brandon Whitaker is quick, and he's as good a receiver as he is a runner. He didn't have more than nine carries in a game last season but hasn't lost a fumble in his last 221 touches. Receivers Ernest Smith and Justin Fenty have great speed but lack experience. They, along with Justin Akers, David Gettis and Thomas White, must replace Dominique Zeigler and Trent Shelton, two of the best receivers in school history. Of the four starters who return on offense, three are on the line: Chad Smith, Jason Smith, who switched from right to left tackle in '06, and guard Dan Gay, who has played just one season on offense.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Even with a new coordinator, Baylor will stay in a 4-2-5 defense and attempt to keep up a ballhawking style that forced 56 turnovers the past two seasons.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Joe Pawelek, a freshman All-American last season, and Nick Moore give Baylor two of the league's better linebackers, and the front four will be decent. End Geoff Nelson is the team's best pass rusher, end Jason

Lamb made a quick transition from tight end, and Vincent Rhodes and Trey Bryant showed promise inside. But the secondary could be soft. Josh Bell and Alton Widemon have relatively little experience, and Dwain Crawford, the team's best D-back, is switching from free safety to rover.

SPECIAL TEAMS All-American punter Daniel Sepulveda is

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at TCU	7-17
9-8	Rice	
9-15	Texas State	
9-22	at Buffalo	
9-29	at Texas A&M	21-31
10-6	Colorado	34-31
10-13	at Kansas	36-35
10-20	Texas	31-63
10-27	at Kansas State	17-3
11-3	• Texas Tech	21-55
11-10	■ at Oklahoma	10-36
11-17	▲ Oklahoma State	24-66

■ Toughest game • Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big 12 schedule strength: 9th

gone, and the Bears will have a new kicker as well. Freshmen Derek Epperson and Shea Brewster will fill those roles unless walk-on kicker Caleb Allen claims the job. Mikail Baker is a solid kick returner.

COACHING STAFF It was completely overhauled after defensive coordinator Bill Bradley went to the Chargers and four assistants left. Larry Hoefer replaces Bradley, Cornell Jackson will take over the running backs, and Eric Schnupp joins the staff as tight ends coach.

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Michael Machen. He has experience in the Braves' and Orioles' minor league systems, had football stints at Alabama and a junior college and started 11 games at Kent State. He's 25—and has one year to make good.

2 CB Josh Bell. A fifth-year senior, Bell never has started a game, but he's a front-runner for one of the starting spots in the depleted secondary. He had just eight tackles in '06, though—the Bears will need more production.

Projected finish

ATLANTIC



COASTAL



ACC

New coaches will try to restore old order

The ACC added Boston College, Miami and Virginia Tech from the Big East earlier this decade to boost its football profile.

So what happens in 2006? Wake Forest—that's right, *Wake Forest*—wins the league title. And the Demon Deacons beat Georgia Tech in

the league title game.

That's not what ACC bigwigs expected. And it's certainly not what league athletic directors expected, either, which might help explain why there are four new coaches in the conference this season.

Officials at Miami, North Carolina and N.C. State didn't like the direction of their programs and fired the guys in charge. Another school, Boston College, was forced to find a new coach after Tom O'Brien was poached by N.C. State to replace Chuck Amato.

Miami promoted defensive coordinator Randy Shannon to replace Larry Co-ker, North Carolina hired former Hurricanes coach Butch Davis to take over for John Bunting and Boston College selected Green Bay Packers offensive coordinator Jeff Jagodzinski—a former Eagles assistant—as O'Brien's replacement.

Things should get back to normal this season, with Virginia Tech looking like the league's standard-bearer. If the Hokies get adequate quarterback play, they will win the league. If they get exceptional quarterback play, they could play for the national title.

And if a surprise team wins the league again in 2007? It's safe to say one or two more schools will be looking for new coaches at the end of the season.



BOB LEVERONE / SN

If Sean Glennon (7) or Ike Whitaker takes Tech's QB play up a notch, it could be hello New Orleans.

ASCENDING ▲

North Carolina and N.C. State. It might not show this season, but savvy offseason coaching hires—Butch Davis at UNC and Tom O'Brien at State—will help these programs get on the right track. Look for both of these teams to beat at least one opponent they shouldn't this season.

DESCENDING ▼

Wake Forest. The Demon Deacons will settle back into the pack after last season's miracle run to the league title. That's not to say Wake is going back to being a doormat, just that it's not going to be as good as it was last season. Of course, that's exactly what Jim Grobe and his players want us to say.

Honor roll

Best pregame atmosphere: Clemson
Best home-field advantage: Virginia Tech
Best stadium: Memorial Stadium, Clemson
Best fans: Virginia Tech
Best mascot: Chief Osceola and Renegade, Florida State
Strongest arm: Xavier Lee, Florida State
Most dangerous scrambler: Jameel Sewell, Virginia
Fastest running back: Antone Smith, Florida State
Most physical receiver: De'Cody Fagg, Florida State
Surest hands: Danny Oquendo, Maryland
Most dominant O-lineman: Barry Richardson, Clemson
Most disruptive end: Calais Campbell, Miami
Best run-stuffing tackle: B.J. Raji, Boston College
Hardest-hitting linebacker: Vince Hall, Virginia Tech
Best cover man: Brandon Flowers, Virginia Tech
Top NFL prospect: Kenny Phillips, FS, Miami

Coming back from injuries

Micah Andrews, TB, Wake Forest. The son of former NFL star William Andrews blew out his knee after three games last season. If he returns at 100 percent, he will give Wake a big-time weapon as a runner and safety-valve receiver.

Tramaine Billie, OLB, Clemson. Billie, who broke his ankle, was one of two stud linebackers lost by the Tigers last season. The only question about his return centers on academics, not his ankle.

Paul Griffin, DT, Florida State. Griffin, who had earned a starting job, blew out his knee in Game 2 and missed the rest of the 2006 season. His return will be welcome for a shaky defensive interior.

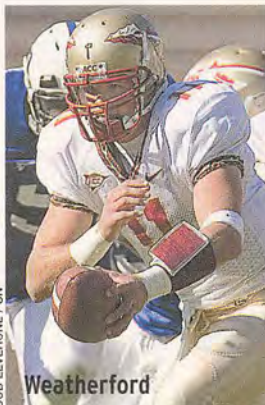
Time to get it done

Florida State's quarterbacks. Drew Weatherford regressed last year, but Xavier Lee, who has a cannon for an arm, wasn't much better. Was it coaching, or are these guys just not that good? New coordinator Jimbo Fisher was hired to get to the bottom of this mess.

James Johnson, WR, Georgia Tech. All this guy has to do is replace Calvin Johnson, maybe the best receiver in school history. He has good speed but isn't nearly as physical—and if he falters, Tech's passing game will struggle.

Miami's quarterbacks. Like Florida State, Miami's quarterbacks have been underwhelming. Kyle Wright and Kirby Freeman will command priority attention from new coordinator Patrick Nix, who had some experience with underachieving quarterbacks at Georgia Tech.

Ricky Sapp, DE, Clemson. Sapp, who has the unenviable task of replacing Gaines Adams, has great quickness off the edge, though he needs to add weight.



BOB LEVERONE / SN

Weatherford

All-conference

FIRST TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Darnius Heyward-Bey, Maryland (6-2, 206, So.)
WR	Kevin Challenger, Boston College (5-9, 178, Sr.)
TE	Anthony Hill, N.C. State (6-6, 265, Sr.)
T	Andrew Gardner, Georgia Tech (6-6, 298, Jr.)
T	Barry Richardson, Clemson (6-7, 320, Sr.)
G	Andrew Crummey, Maryland (6-5, 301, Sr.)
G	Sergio Render, Virginia Tech (6-3, 320, So.)
C	Steve Justice, Wake Forest (6-4, 284, Sr.)
QB	Matt Ryan, Boston College (6-5, 218, Sr.)
RB	Tashard Choice, Georgia Tech (6-1, 205, Sr.)
RB	Brandon Ore, Virginia Tech (5-11, 202, Jr.)

Defense

E	Calais Campbell, Miami (6-8, 282, Jr.)
E	Chris Long, Virginia (6-4, 284, Sr.)
T	Andre Fluellen, Florida State (6-4, 286, Sr.)
T	B.J. Raji, Boston College (6-1, 340, Sr.)
LB	Vince Hall, Virginia Tech (6-0, 240, Sr.)
LB	Erin Henderson, Maryland (6-3, 236, Jr.)
LB	Philip Wheeler, Georgia Tech (6-2, 230, Sr.)
CB	Brandon Flowers, Virginia Tech (5-10, 190, Jr.)
CB	DeJuan Tribble, Boston College (5-9, 290, Sr.)
S	Kenny Phillips, Miami (6-2, 202, Jr.)
S	Jamal Lewis, Georgia Tech (6-0, 199, Sr.)

Specialists

K	Sam Swank, Wake Forest (6-2, 206, Jr.)
P	Durant Brooks, Georgia Tech (6-1, 202, Sr.)
KR	Darrell Blackman, N.C. State (5-10, 205, Sr.)
SN All-American	

Players of the year

Offense: Brandon Ore, TB, Virginia Tech
Defense: Calais Campbell, E, Miami

SECOND TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Greg Carr, Florida State (6-5, 212, So.)
WR	Hakeem Nicks, North Carolina (6-1, 210, So.)
TE	Tom Santi, Virginia (6-5, 250, Sr.)
T	Duane Brown, Virginia Tech (6-5, 310, Sr.)
T	Jason Fox, Miami (6-6, 265, So.)
G	Chris DeGeare, Wake Forest (6-4, 362, Jr.)
G	Ryan Poles, Boston College (6-4, 295, Sr.)
C	John Frady, Florida State (6-4, 279, Jr.)
QB	Jameel Sewell, Virginia (6-3, 219, So.)
RB	James Davis, Clemson (5-11, 205, Jr.)
RB	Antone Smith, Florida State (5-9, 188, So.)

Defense

E	Nick Larkin, Boston College (6-4, 250, Sr.)
T	Dorell Scott, Clemson (6-4, 305, Jr.)
E	Phillip Merling, Clemson (6-5, 270, Jr.)
LB	Xavier Adibi, Virginia Tech (6-2, 226, Sr.)
LB	Jon Copper, Virginia (6-0, 232, Jr.)
LB	Geno Hayes, Florida State (6-2, 215, So.)
LB	Darryl Sharpton, Miami (5-11, 227, So.)
CB	Tony Carter, Florida State (5-9, 160, So.)
CB	Alphonso Smith, Wake Forest (5-9, 191, Jr.)
S	Chris Clemmons, Clemson (6-1, 205, Jr.)
S	Myron Rolle, Florida State (6-2, 218, So.)

Specialists

K	Connor Barth, North Carolina (6-1, 190, Sr.)
P	Sam Swank, Wake Forest (6-2, 206, Jr.)
KR	Eddie Royal, Virginia Tech (5-10, 181, Sr.)

Newcomers of the year

Offense: Harrison Beck, QB, N.C. State
Defense: Marvin Austin, T, North Carolina

Newcomers to watch

Marvin Austin, DT, North Carolina. This Washington, D.C., recruit might have been the best nationally at his position. If Austin lives up to billing, the Heels could have a solid defensive line.

Harrison Beck and Justin Burke, QBs, N.C. State. Beck, a sophomore transfer from Nebraska, brings with

him questions about his talent level. Burke is a redshirt freshman from Lexington, Ky., who threw 62 TD passes (against just six interceptions) as a high school senior. The Wolfpack likely will have a three-way free-for-all among Beck, Burke and returning starter Daniel Evans before this season's starter is deter-

mined in fall camp. New coach Tom O'Brien places a priority on mistake-free football, so he might not necessarily choose the most physically gifted guy.

Brian Coulter, DE, Florida State. The Seminoles' only junior college recruit brings a reputation as a good pass rusher—a skill Florida

State's defense badly needs.

Willy Korn, QB, Clemson. He heads into fall practice as No. 2 on the depth chart, but he has more raw talent than projected starter Cullen Harper. It's not a stretch to think Korn could work his way into a rotation—or start—as the season progresses.



A.J. MAST FOR TSN

Gotta-see games

> Florida State at Clemson, Sept. 3

Both teams have numerous questions as father and son kick off the season against each other.

> Virginia Tech at LSU, Sept. 8

If the Hokies can win this nonconference matchup at Baton Rouge, talk of an undefeated season becomes legitimate.

> Boston College at Georgia Tech, Sept. 15

This will be an early season shakeout game for two of the league's dark-horse contenders.

> Florida State at Wake Forest, Oct. 11

Are the defending ACC champions for real again? We'll know after a midseason test against the Seminoles.

> Miami at Florida State, Oct. 20

This remains one of the fiercest rivalries in the nation, even though both teams are coming off bad seasons.

> Virginia at Maryland, Oct. 20

If either team is alive at this point in the league race, a loss probably would eliminate it from contention.

> Florida State at Boston College, Nov. 3

This could be an elimination game in the Atlantic Division.

> Wake Forest at Clemson, Nov. 10

This could be an important game in the Atlantic Division. It could be important for bowl positioning. Or it could mean absolutely nothing.

> Florida State at Virginia Tech, Nov. 10

The first of two huge back-to-back games for the Hokies.

> Miami at Virginia Tech, Nov. 17

This battle could have major conference—and national—implications.

> **Dream schedule** **Virginia.** The Cavaliers have two early road games, but they're at Wyoming and North Carolina and they're sandwiched around a home game against Duke. Virginia plays three of its next four games at home with the one road trip to Middle Tennessee. The schedule really doesn't get hard until November. Plus, the Cavs don't play Boston College, Clemson or Florida State.

> **Nightmare schedule** **Florida State.** The Seminoles play only five home games with nonconference battles at Colorado and Florida and against

Alabama at Jacksonville. They will play at home one time in September and once in a brutal four-game November stretch. Florida State will play back-to-back home games once all season, and four key conference matchups—Clemson, Wake Forest, Boston College, Virginia Tech—will be played on the road. Welcome to Bobby Bowden's version of football hell.

> **Bowl bound** Eight league teams went bowl-ing last season. Look for seven this time around: Boston College, Clemson, Florida State, Georgia Tech, Miami, Virginia and Virginia Tech.

Guys who change game plans

James Davis and C.J. Spiller, RBs, Clemson. Junior James Davis and sophomore C.J. Spiller, the best tailback duo in the nation, combined for 2,125 yards and 27 rushing touchdowns last season. Both have good speed, both are shifty and both can run right up the gut as easily as they can get outside. They also are the only proven playmakers for the Tigers this season. Thus, Clemson can expect to see a lot of eight-man lines—unless it proves it can pass.

Calais Campbell, DE, Miami. Campbell, at 6-8 and 282-pounds, is a beast off the edge. He had 10½ sacks and 17 quarterback pressures last season, thanks to a surprisingly quick first step for a man of his size. If you don't double-team him, he's going to get to your quarterback.

Jameel Sewell, QB, Virginia. We're going out on a limb here. Sewell had his ups and downs as a redshirt freshman and first-time starter last season. But a year of maturity and superior athleticism could translate into tough times ahead for opposing defenses. Plus, he's a lefty, which causes even more problems. Sewell has a nice arm and good mobility; if he's steady, the Cavs might get a shot at a bowl.

Guys who make game plans

ON THE HOT SEAT: Al Groh, Virginia. He's surly, which means he'll never get the benefit of the doubt from the media. And his teams underachieve. He and his staff have recruited well, but it really hasn't showed up on the field. The question, then: Is Virginia OK with a mediocre program?

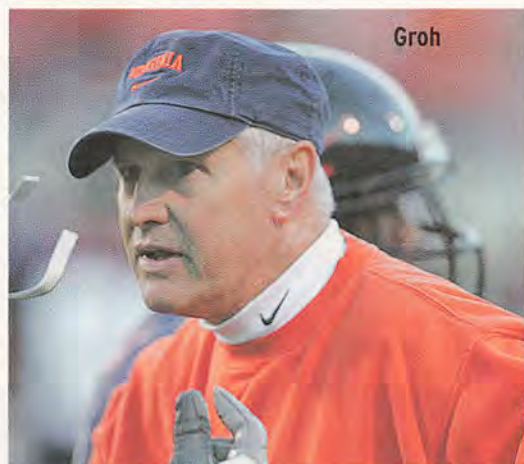
BEST COACH: Frank Beamer, Virginia Tech. He deserves some criticism for his players' off-field behavior—and some of their on-field antics, too. But the Hokies are fundamentally sound and play hard—and, oh yeah, they win.

BEST OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rob Spence, Clemson. He has been called "The Mad Scientist" because he loves to tinker with formations and schemes. The thing is, he doesn't have a lot to work with at quarterback this season, so the Tigers' production might suffer. But don't think for a minute that Spence doesn't know what he's doing.

BEST DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jon Tenuta, Georgia Tech. He loves aggressive, attacking football, and he gets his players to play with a high level of emotion. It wouldn't be a surprise if he's a head coach next year at this time.

RIISING STAR: Jimbo Fisher, Florida State offensive coordinator. Meet the "it" coordinator who was hired to make Florida State the "it" program again. Fisher excels at identifying matchups he can exploit and is astute at making game-day adjustments.

BEST STAFF: Virginia Tech. Beamer is one of the best in the business. So is defensive coordinator Bud Foster, whose defenses always are solid. Offensive coordinator Bryan Stinespring also is good. And some of the position coaches—running backs coach Billy Hite, quarterbacks coach Mike O'Cain, defensive line coach Charley Wiles—have excellent track records.



UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

> Who they don't play

Boston College: Duke, North Carolina, Virginia

Clemson: Miami, North Carolina, Virginia

Duke: Boston College, Maryland, N.C. State

Florida State: Georgia Tech, North Carolina, Virginia

Georgia Tech: Florida State, N.C. State, Wake Forest

Maryland: Duke, Miami, Virginia Tech

Miami: Clemson, Maryland, Wake Forest

North Carolina: Boston College, Clemson, Florida State

N.C. State: Duke, Georgia Tech, Virginia Tech

Virginia: Boston College, Clemson, Florida State

Virginia Tech: Maryland, N.C. State, Wake Forest

Wake Forest: Georgia Tech, Miami, Virginia Tech

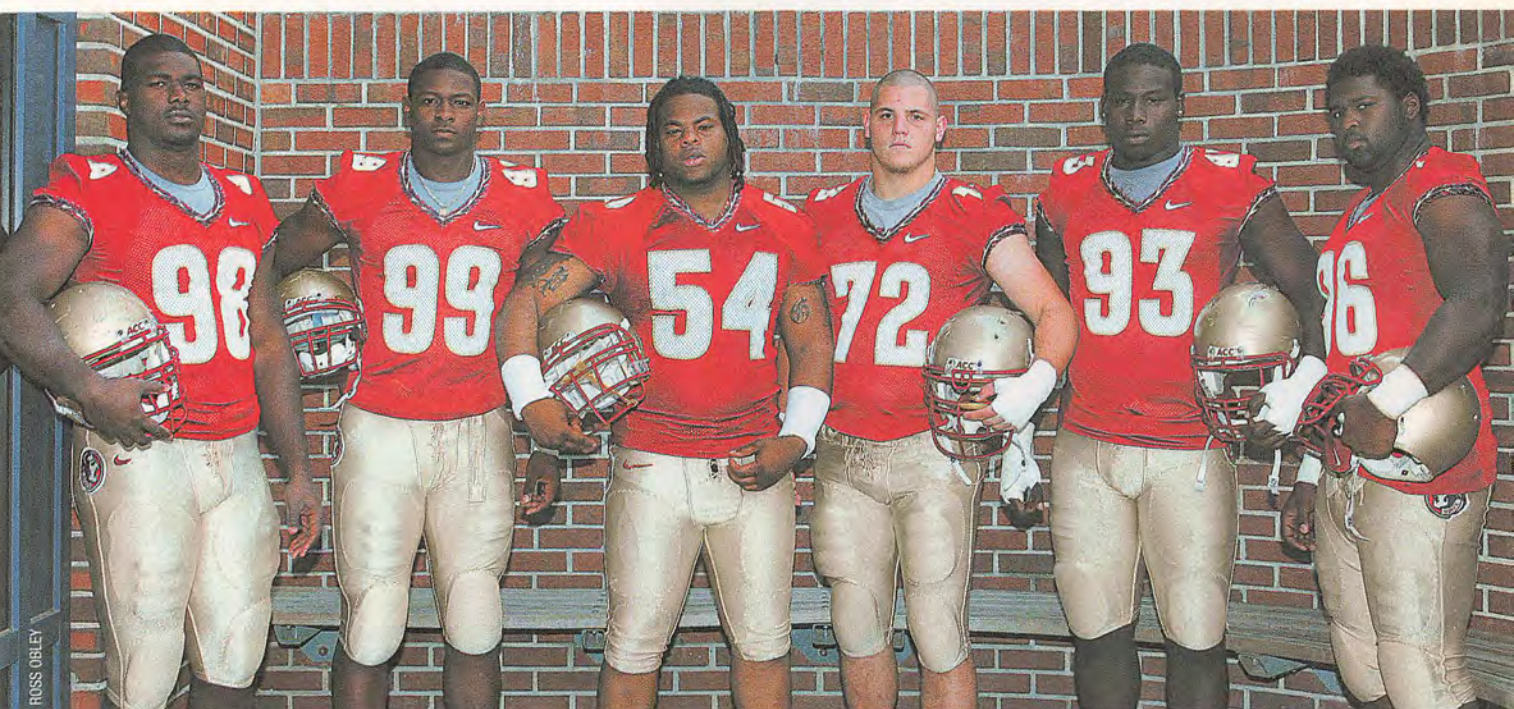
UNIT
rankings

	Backfield	Receivers	Offensive line	Overall	Defensive line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
Boston College	2	4	3	1	3	2	6	4	7	10
Clemson	1	6	8	5	5	7	8	7	9	7
Duke	11	11	12	12	12	12	11	12	12	12
Georgia Tech	4	9	1	4	1	3	5	3	1	4
Florida State	7	5	7	6	8	6	3	6	6	5
Maryland	9	1	2	3	9	10	7	9	11	6
Miami	6	7	9	8	4	4	1	2	10	9
North Carolina	12	10	11	11	10	11	12	11	2	8
N.C. State	10	3	10	10	11	9	9	10	8	3
Virginia	5	12	5	9	6	5	4	5	4	11
Virginia Tech	3	2	6	2	2	1	2	1	5	1
Wake Forest	8	8	4	7	7	8	10	8	3	2

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

Returning leaders

RUSHING Player, school, class	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.		
1. Tashard Choice, Georgia Tech, Sr.	14	297	1,473	5.0	46	12	105.2	9		
2. James Davis, Clemson, Jr.	13	203	1,187	5.8	64	17	91.3	25		
3. Brandon Ore, Virginia Tech, Jr.	12	241	1,137	4.7	70	16	94.8	27		
4. C.J. Spiller, Clemson, So.	13	129	938	7.3	80	10	72.2	45		
5. Lance Ball, Maryland, Sr.	13	174	815	4.7	42	8	62.7	63		
PASSING Player, school, class	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1. Matt Ryan, Boston College, Sr.	12	263	427	61.6	10	2,942	11.2	15	126.4	119
2. Sean Glennon, Virginia Tech, Jr.	13	170	302	56.3	11	2,191	12.9	11	122.0	54
3. Drew Weatherford, Florida State, Jr.	12	177	318	55.7	11	2,154	12.2	12	118.1	57
4. Thaddeus Lewis, Duke, So.	12	180	340	52.9	16	2,134	11.9	11	106.9	62
5. Riley Skinner, Wake Forest, So.	14	171	260	65.8	5	2,051	12.0	9	139.6	64
RECEIVING Player, school, class	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.	
1. Kevin Challenger, Boston College, Sr.	13	47	543	30	5	3.6	11.6	41.8	—	
t2. Darrius Heyward-Bey, Maryland, So.	13	45	694	96	5	3.5	15.4	53.4	—	
t2. Anthony Hill, N.C. State, Sr.	12	45	478	29	0	3.8	10.6	39.8	—	
4. Jomar Wright, Duke, Sr.	10	40	561	54	2	4.0	14.0	56.1	—	
5. Raphael Chestnut, Duke, Jr.	12	39	375	17	2	3.3	9.6	31.3	—	



FSU's defensive line (left to right): Alex Boston, Everette Brown, Paul Griffin, Budd Thacker, Letroy Guion and Andre Fluellen.

Recruiting buzz

Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact	Diamond in the rough
1. North Carolina	DT Marvin Austin, 6-2/291	WR Dwight Jones, 6-5/210	WR Charles Brown, 5-9/187
2. Miami	QB Robert Marve, 6-1/189	RB Graig Cooper, 5-11/185	DT Chris Perry, 6-3/319
3. Florida State	CB Donte Allen, 5-11/175	OL Zach Hillery, 6-4/315	OL A.J. Ganguzzo, 6-2/260
4. Georgia Tech	RB Jonathan Dwyer, 6-0/197	WR D.J. Donley, 6-4/200	WR Tyler Melton, 6-0/182
5. Clemson	QB Willy Korn, 6-2/200	DB Marcus Gilchrist, 5-11/175	DE Drew Taylor, 6-4/224
6. Virginia	QB Peter Lalich, 6-5/235	DB Ras-I Dowling, 6-2/180	RB Corey Mosley, 5-8/193
7. Virginia Tech	QB Tyrod Taylor, 6-1/200	RB Darren Evans, 6-foot-0/207	LB Hunter Owens, 6-0/220
8. Maryland	OT Bruce Campbell, 6-7/272	ATH Tony Logan, 5-10/170	Stephen St. John, 6-6/285
9. Boston College	DE Corey Eason, 6-5/265	LB Dan Williams, 6-3/228	QB Dominique Davis, 6-4/185
10. N.C. State	WR Jay Smith, 6-4/200	DE Antoine Holmes, 6-4/270	DT Wayne Crawford, 6-3/275
11. Duke	DE Charlie Hatcher, 6-2/266	TE Danny Parker, 6-4/228	OT Jonathan Needham, 6-7/312
12. Wake Forest	ATH John Stamper, 5-11/182	DL Uriah Grant, 6-0/252	CB Josh Bush, 6-0/185

Rankings by Rivals.com

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
Virginia Tech	10-3	11-2	10-3 [^]	8-5	10-4	49-17
Miami	7-6	9-3	9-3 [^]	12-1	11-2	48-15
Boston College	10-3	9-3 [^]	9-3	8-5	9-4	45-18
Florida State	7-6	8-5 [^]	9-3	10-3 [^]	9-5 [^]	43-22
Maryland	9-4	5-6	5-6	10-3	11-3	40-22
Clemson	8-5	8-4	6-5	9-4	7-6	38-24
Virginia	5-7	7-5	8-4	8-5	9-5	37-26
Georgia Tech	9-5	7-5	7-5	7-6	7-6	37-27
N.C. State	3-9	7-5	5-6	8-5	11-3	34-28
Wake Forest	11-3 [^]	4-7	4-7	5-7	7-6	31-30
North Carolina	3-9	5-6	6-6	2-10	3-9	19-40
Duke	0-12	1-10	2-9	4-8	2-10	9-49

[^]Conference champ [^]Joined conference

SEMINOLES

Smith

The Seminoles really haven't been the Seminoles lately. FSU has lost 22 times the past five seasons, including last year's 7-6 debacle; that was their third five-loss season in that span. There has been an overhaul of the coaching staff, which should help. But a tough schedule and holes everywhere likely mean a return to glory is another season away. It would be a surprise if the Seminoles win more than nine games.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Like most teams, FSU wants a balanced offense. But new coordinator Jimbo Fisher's main emphasis will be restoring the Seminoles' big-play ability. The Seminoles suffered with Jeff Bowden as the coordinator. We'll see if all the problems were his fault.

SKILL POSITIONS Tailback Antone Smith shared time the past two seasons, but the job is his now. Smith is a burner who can score from anywhere. He's an OK receiver, too. Greg Carr and De'Cody Fagg will start at wide receiver. Each has shown he can be *the guy* at times but inconsistency has plagued both, and Carr has been called out by the coaches for his lack of interest in blocking and practicing. There appears to be good talent behind that duo, but no other receiver has done anything on the college level.

Quarterback Drew Weatherford started the past two seasons, but he regressed last year. He still makes way too many mistakes: throws too high, throws too low, throws into coverage, makes bad reads. Xavier Lee likely will battle Weatherford for the starting job right up to the opener. Lee has a ton of physical skills but struggled running the old offense.

OFFENSIVE LINE The unit has been a mess. Are the linemen not that good or has the coach-

Quickhits

Stadium: Doak Campbell (grass, 82,300)

Site: Tallahassee, Fla.

Coach: Bobby Bowden (293-81-4, 31 years; 366-113-4 overall, 41 years)

Offensive coordinator: Jimbo Fisher (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Mickey Andrews (24th year)

Last league title won: 2005.

Last year not in a bowl: 1981.

2006 record: 7-6, 3-5/5th ACC Atlantic

Emerald Bowl: Beat UCLA, 44-27

BOB LEVERONE / SN

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 TB Antone Smith. He has played a lot as a reserve, but now the starting job is his. The ground game sputtered badly the past few seasons, perhaps an offshoot of players sharing time. This season, it's all on Smith.

2 LB Marcus Ball. FSU has been blessed with talented linebackers, but there aren't many proven ones on the roster this season. Ball is coming off a knee injury, but he should be healthy and would provide a big-play threat.



An ACC coach says ...

Jimbo Fisher has a good reputation because he's won before. They needed a change, and he's going to make a difference. He's a breath of fresh air. ... I thought QB **Drew Weatherford** was going to have a breakout year, but that didn't happen. ... **S Myron Rolle** is going to be a very good player. He was a typical freshman last year. He was a little overwhelmed. But he has everything that you want in a defensive back. ... They should be better up front on offense, but there isn't anyone there that you would say is all that great.

ing—and the offensive scheme—been the problem? New line coach Rick Trickett, who came from West Virginia, is expected to change things. He wants a leaner, meaner, more mobile group. Center John Frady has all-conference potential, but the rest of the group is a mixed bag. Left tackle is a huge concern. Guard Jacky Claude and tackle Shannon Boatman are the other returning starters, and one or two true freshmen likely will play.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Mickey Andrews likes to keep it simple: *See the guys in the other jerseys? Run as fast as you can toward the guy with the ball and punish him when you get there.* Of late, he hasn't had his usual front seven talent, which has put a damper on the 'Noles' performance.

FRONT SEVEN Tackle Andre Fluellen is the best player up front, and he has All-ACC potential. The return of tackle Paul Griffin from knee surgery should help, as will the continued development of tackles Letroy Guion and Budd Thacker. FSU had 27 sacks last season, but 15 of those came from linebackers. It's vital that an end (Kevin McNeil? Alex Boston? Everette Brown? Junior college transfer Brian Coulter?) step up to provide a pass rush.

Geno Hayes is moving from weakside linebacker to the middle; he has big-play ability. The outside spots are a concern because of inexperience. Marcus Ball and

Dekoda Watson are the front-runners.

SECONDARY All four starters are back. Strong safety Myron Rolle lived up to the hype as a freshman last season. He's instinctive, can run, has good ball skills and packs a wallop. Free safety Roger Williams makes a lot of tackles, but he's nothing special. Cornerback is the strongest position on the team with Tony Carter and Jamie Robinson as the starters. Speedy Michael Ray Garvin is a solid nickel guy.

SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Gary Cismesia has been adequate, nothing more. He started off hot last season (going 9-of-10) before fading (finishing 14-of-20). Punter Graham Gano has a nice leg and knows how to place his kicks (17 inside the 20). He's also the kickoff man.

Averages put up by the kick returners last season: 9.1 yards on punt returns and 18.7 on kickoff returns. Those are numbers for Duke, not FSU. Garvin should be the lead kick returner again, but the punt-return job won't be decided until fall drills.

COACHING STAFF This is Bobby Bowden's 32nd season at FSU, and last season was the second-worst of his tenure. He cleaned house with his offensive staff, bringing in four new coaches. Fisher and Trickett have a ton of pressure on them to produce now. The defensive staff added former N.C. State coach Chuck Amato as linebackers coach—that was the job he held at FSU before being hired at N.C. State.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Antone Smith	88	456	5.2	5	
Xavier Lee	23	84	3.7	0	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Drew Weatherford	177-318-11	2,154		12	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
De'Cody Fagg	37	439	11.9	1	
Greg Carr	34	619	18.2	12	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Michael Ray Garvin	16	362	22.6	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Gary Cismesia	39	40	14	20	81
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Myron Rolle	31	46	77	5.5/22	
Roger Williams	36	31	67		1/2
Geno Hayes	31	28	59		12/62
Sacks: Everette Brown, Hayes, Kevin McNeil (3)					
Interceptions: Williams (4)					



Carr

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-3	at Clemson*	20-27	2-3
9-8	UAB		2-0
9-15	at Colorado		1-0
9-29	▲ vs. Alabama^		0-2-1
10-6	N.C. State	20-24	2-3
10-11	at Wake Forest^	0-30	4-1
10-20	Miami	13-10	2-3
10-27	Duke	51-24	5-0
11-3	● at Boston College	19-24	3-2
11-10	■ at Virginia Tech		5-0
11-17	Maryland	24-27	3-2
11-24	at Florida	14-21	2-3

*Monday ^at Jacksonville °Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

ACC schedule strength: 1st

>The Series Florida (19-30-2): The Seminoles have lost three in a row, which is draining juice from this rivalry.

>The Showdown at Clemson: Forget all of that silly Bowden Bowl talk, this season-opener will go a long way toward setting the tone for two coaches who sit squarely in the crosshairs. All eyes will be on the FSU offense. Is it better?

>The Smack Put up or shut up. Are the Seminoles the Seminoles again? We'll find out quickly when Florida State meets Alabama for the first time since 1974. How will Bobby Bowden's revamped offense fare against Nick Saban's defensive acumen? But November is the month to remember because of three road games that figure to tell the tale of the season.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	81	De'Cody Fagg (6-3, 218, Sr.)
	80	Joslin Shaw (5-10, 183, Sr.)
LT	76	Daron Rose (6-5, 284, So.)
	78	Matt Hardrick (6-5, 352, So.)
LG	68	Jacky Claude (6-4, 290, Sr.)
	61	Tyler Graves (6-6, 272, Fr.)
C	60	Ryan McMahon (6-3, 273, Fr.)
	67	John Frady (6-4, 279, Sr.)
RG	79	David Overmyer (6-5, 280, Sr.)
	71	Evan Bellamy (6-4, 306, Fr.)
RT	73	Shannon Boatman (6-7, 324, Sr.)
	77	Caz Piurowski (6-7, 277, So.)
TE	45	Charlie Graham (6-3, 240, So.)
		Jonathan Persons (6-0, 235, Jr.)
WR	85	Richard Goodman (6-0, 182, Jr.)
	89	Greg Carr (6-5, 212, Jr.)
QB	11	Drew Weatherford (6-3, 220, Jr.)
	9	Xavier Lee (6-4, 236, Jr.)
RB	6	Antone Smith (5-9, 188, Jr.)
	33	Jamaal Edwards (6-0, 211, Jr.)
FB	41	Sedrick Holloway (5-10, 257, So.)
	32	Joe Surratt (6-1, 258, Sr.)
K	12	Gary Cismesia (5-11, 211, Sr.)
KR	29	Michael Ray Garvin (5-8, 181, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	98	Alex Boston (6-3, 264, Sr.)
	59	Neely Moffett (6-1, 245, Jr.)
T	96	Andre Fluellen (6-4, 286, Sr.)
	93	Letroy Guion (6-4, 286, Jr.)
T	54	Paul Griffin (6-1, 288, Jr.)
	72	Budd Thacker (6-2, 275, So.)
E	99	Everette Brown (6-4, 240, So.)
		Walter Small (6-2, 224, So.)
SLB	44	Marcus Ball (6-0, 213, So.)
	36	Dekoda Watson (6-2, 224, So.)
MLB	55	Derek Nicholson (6-2, 230, Jr.)
	48	Recardo Wright (6-2, 215, So.)
WLB	10	Geno Hayes (6-2, 215, Jr.)
	37	Rodney Gallon (6-0, 200, Jr.)
CB	15	Tony Carter (5-9, 160, Jr.)
	21	Patrick Robinson (5-11, 190, So.)
FS	8	Roger Williams (6-0, 200, Sr.)
	24	Darius McClure (5-11, 198, Jr.)
SS	3	Myron Rolle (6-2, 218, So.)
	23	Roosevelt Lawson (5-11, 187, Jr.)
CB	20	Jamie Robinson (6-2, 187, So.)
	29	Michael Ray Garvin (5-8, 181, Jr.)
P	43	Graham Gano (6-1, 190, Jr.)
PR		Bert Reed* (5-11, 165, Fr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman



EAGLES

Tom O'Brien left the cupboard full when he bolted for N.C. State. He even said the 2007 Eagles could have been his best team. But there is a catch. New coach Jeff Jagodzinski inherits 16 returning starters, but he also gets a schedule that will ease him into the job ... then run him through the ringer. Five of the first six games are at home—and winnable; the rest of the schedule includes road games at Notre Dame, Virginia Tech, Maryland and Clemson and home dates with Florida State and Miami. Another 10-win season is unlikely.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY New coordinator Steve Logan prefers mobile quarterbacks, which Matt Ryan is not. But Logan

likes Ryan's arm and his brain, so they'll play to their strengths. Ryan will have freedom to change things at the line and a good stable of tailbacks to keep defenses honest. The switch to Jagodzinski's zone-blocking scheme should get more ground production.

SKILL POSITIONS In a league low on great passers, Ryan stands out. Despite nagging injuries, he received all-conference honors last year and drew raves in the spring

Ryan

Quick hits

Stadium: Alumni (artificial, 44,500).
Site: Chestnut Hill, Mass.

Coach: Jeff Jagodzinski (1st year)

Offensive coordinator:

Steve Logan (1st year)

Defensive coordinator:

Frank Spaziani (9th year)

Last league title won: 2004 (Big East, tie).

Last year not in a bowl: 1998.

2006 record: 10-3, 5-3/T2nd

ACC Atlantic

Meineke Car Care Bowl: Beat Navy, 25-24

from Jagodzinski. The backfield is full with seniors L.V. Whitworth and Andre Callender, who have rushed for more than 4,000 combined yards. But Jeff Smith, an electrifying kick returner, would like to get in the mix, too. The tailbacks will get plenty of work until a receiving threat emerges. Last year's big-play target, Tony Gonzalez, is gone, and leading receiver

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 TE Ryan Purvis. He started just two games last year but caught 29 passes, including one for a touchdown in a bowl win over Navy. With a good quarterback but no star wide receivers, look for Purvis to play a much bigger role.

2 DE Alex Albright. The defensive line might be loaded with veterans, but that won't stop Albright from making a serious push to start. He played in all 13 games as a true freshman last year and started in the bowl game.

BOB LEVERONE / SN



An ACC coach says ...

I like FS **Jamie Silva**. He anticipates well. He may not have biggest numbers, but he hits you. He reads the quarterback and anticipates where the ball is going. He studies the game. ... QB **Matt Ryan** makes really good decisions. He has good arm strength and is just fast enough to get away from the rush. He can run for a first down if he has to. He'll be an NFL quarterback because he makes plays. ... LB **Brian Toal** is a good, hard-nosed kid, but I think their system helps them out. Is he a great player? No. He's just one of many players on a good defense.

Kevin Challenger sat out the spring with an injury. Logan hopes Brandon Robinson will have a breakout year. If not, tight ends Ryan Purvis and Ryan Thompson will get plenty of work.

OFFENSIVE LINE The good news is that the Eagles return three starting linemen. The bad news is the two they lost were third- and fourth-round NFL draft picks. Tackle Gosder Cherilus, who has started 37 straight games, is one of the returnees. Center Kevin Sheridan and guard Ryan Poles also are back. And the top candidates at the two vacant spots, guard Tom Anevski and tackle Ty Hall, are both experienced seniors. The starters should be fine, but depth could be an issue.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY With nine starters back, coordinator Frank Spaziani won't have to change much from his previous eight seasons on the job. A ferocious set of linebackers set the tone for a team that's always tough against the run.

FRONT SEVEN Even if Brian Toal isn't ready to return from shoulder surgery, the linebackers unit will be stout. Jolonn Dunbar, the team's leading tackler last year, is a vicious hitter, and Tyrone Pruitt is a sure tackler. Toal is a head-knocker whose dual role as a goal-line fullback might be over. If Toal can't play, junior Robert Francois, who started seven games in place of Toal last season, will get the call. The front wall, which returns all four starters, isn't far behind the linebackers. B.J. Raji, a run-clogging tackle, is the headliner, and Nick Larkin

has started 25 straight games at end. Ron Brace joins Raji in the middle and Brady Smith is the other end.

SECONDARY Coverage was a concern last season, and the loss of standout strong safety Ryan Glasper doesn't help. But DeJuan Tribble is a strong shutdown cornerback with 27 career starts, and free safety Jamie Silva, another nasty hitter, has made 185 career tackles. The Eagles do need Paul Anderson, who played in all 13 games last year, to solidify the strong safety spot. And they hope a fresh face—or maybe even a familiar one like senior Taji Morris—will emerge at the other corner. Morris, who has starting experience, was shut down last year by injuries.

SPECIAL TEAMS Punting is in the capable hands of Johnny Ayers, who has started 37 consecutive games. Steve Aponavicius, who hit 7-of-11 field goals in his first season of organized football last year, is now on scholarship, but he'll have to battle big-time recruit Billy Bennett for the job. The explosive return duo of Tribble and Jeff Smith also returns.

COACHING STAFF The new crew has a familiar feel. Jagodzinski, fresh from his job as offensive coordinator for the Green Bay Packers, once held that job at Boston College. His defensive coordinator, Spaziani, and linebackers coach, Bill McGovern, are holdovers from O'Brien's staff. And new offensive line coach Jack Bicknell Jr. is a former Eagles player and the son of former Eagles coach Jack Bicknell Sr.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
L.V. Whitworth	174	791	4.5	4
Andre Callender	146	633	4.3	3

Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD
Matt Ryan	263-427-10	2,942	15

Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Kevin Challenger	47	543	11.6	5
Brandon Robinson	36	490	13.6	1

Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Jeff Smith	24	653	27.2	1

Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Steve Aponavicius	24	25	8	11	48

Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.
Jolonn Dunbar	50	42	92	7.5/23
Jamie Silva	37	20	57	6.5/29
Robert Francois	29	23	52	3.5/6

Sacks: Kevin Akins (7.5)

Interceptions: DeJuan Tribble (7)



Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Wake Forest	14-21	2-3
9-8	N.C. State	15-17	2-2
9-15	at Georgia Tech		1-4
9-22	Army		4-1
9-29	Massachusetts		5-0
10-6	Bowling Green		
10-13	▲ at Notre Dame		4-1
10-25	■ at Virginia Tech*	22-3	2-3
11-3	● Florida State	24-19	2-3
11-10	at Maryland	38-16	3-1
11-17	at Clemson	34-33, 2OT	4-0-1
11-24	Miami	14-17	0-5

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

ACC schedule strength: 5th

>The Series Florida State (2-3): They are separated by many miles, but this is a growing rivalry between programs that are the yard stick in the Atlantic Division. Last year's win in Tallahassee has buoyed the confidence of rising Boston College.

>The Showdown vs. N.C. State: Think former BC coach Tom O'Brien will get a hostile welcome? The Eagles' big edge at quarterback should be the difference.

>The Smack Survivor Was it the program or the coach? Continuing Boston College's underrated success with this schedule will be the proof for new coach Jeff Jagodzinski. Every road game is very losable. If a tricky opening doesn't get the Eagles, the last six games could do it.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	2	Brandon Robinson (5-11, 191, Jr.)
	18	Rich Gunnell (5-11, 200, So.)
T	77	Gosder Cherilus (6-7, 320, Sr.)
	66	Richard Lapham (6-8, 336, So.)
G	72	Ryan Poles (6-4, 310, Sr.)
	78	Ty Hall (6-5, 296, Jr.)
C	61	Kevin Sheridan (6-3, 296, Sr.)
	65	Matt Tennant (6-4, 278, So.)
G	67	Tom Anevski (6-4, 301, Sr.)
	71	Carlos Huggins (6-6, 316, Jr.)
T	76	Patrick Sheil (6-6, 284, So.)
	73	Clif Ramsey (6-6, 313, Jr.)
TE	85	Ryan Thompson (6-4, 254, Sr.)
	80	Ryan Purvis (6-4, 261, Jr.)
WR	84	Kevin Challenger (5-9, 177, Sr.)
	11	Clarence Megwa (6-1, 205, So.)
QB	12	Matt Ryan (6-5, 221, Sr.)
	10	Chris Crane (6-5, 228, Jr.)
RB	32	Andre Callender (5-11, 204, Sr.)
	30	L.V. Whitworth (6-0, 222, Sr.)
FB	96	James McCluskey (6-2, 240, Fr.)
	89	Jon Loyte (6-5, 261, Sr.)
K	83	Steve Aponavicius (5-10, 180, Jr.)
KR	6	Jeff Smith (6-1, 207, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	98	Alex Albright (6-6, 230, So.)
	97	Brady Smith (6-3, 250, So.)
T	60	Ron Brace (6-3, 343, Jr.)
	99	Jerry Willette (6-0, 222, Sr.)
T	90	B.J. Raji (6-1, 337, Sr.)
	91	Thomas Claiborne (6-3, 340, Fr.)
E	57	Nick Larkin (6-4, 252, Sr.)
	52	Austin Giles (6-3, 283, So.)
OLB	16	Brian Toal (6-0, 232, Sr.)
	35	Robert Francois (6-2, 235, Jr.)
MLB	40	Jolonn Dunbar (6-1, 224, Sr.)
	94	Mark Herzlich (6-4, 235, So.)
OLB	48	Tyrone Pruitt (5-11, 224, Sr.)
	7	Kevin Akins (6-2, 205, Jr.)
CB	27	DeJuan Tribble (5-9, 189, Sr.)
	17	Razzie Smith (5-9, 174, So.)
FS	44	Jamie Silva (5-11, 205, Sr.)
	8	Marty Bowman (6-2, 206, So.)
SS	45	Wes Davis (6-2, 209, So.)
	19	Paul Anderson (6-1, 207, Jr.)
CB	47	Roderick Rollins (6-0, 170, So.)
	4	Reshaude Goodwin (5-11, 175, Fr.)
P	46	Johnny Ayers (6-0, 186, Sr.)
PR	27	DeJuan Tribble (5-9, 189, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

TIGERS

SN projection **3rd, 7-5, MPC Computers Bowl** National rank **44**

Clemson's fall—the Tigers finished 8-5 after starting 7-1—might have been the biggest in college football last season. So Tommy Bowden finds himself on the hot seat, which is nothing new in his eight lukewarm seasons at the school. Even though the schedule is more friendly this year, none of the quarterbacks has played a meaningful snap, and the offensive line must be retooled. This team has talent but needs to develop leaders.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Rob Spence uses a multitude of formations and loves to call screen passes and run on passing downs. He was too quick to abandon the running attack in some games late last season.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL James Davis and C.J. Spiller give Clemson one of the best two-back rushing combinations in the nation. Spence wants both players on the field at the same time and for Spiller, the team's most explosive threat, to get more touches. Left tackle Barry Richardson is the only starter



back from last year's solid line. Cullen Harper might start the opener at quarterback so megarecruit Willy Korn won't face the pressure of a nationally televised game against Florida State. But Korn will be under center this season. Wideouts Jacoby Ford, who placed third in the 60 meters in the NCAA indoor championships, Aaron Kelly and James Thrash must make some big plays.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Vic Koenning runs zone coverage schemes that limit opponents' big plays. Problem is, quarterbacks who can complete short passes all the way down the field often do so because they seldom face pressure.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The linebackers could be excellent if Tramaine Billie comes back full speed from a broken ankle and Antonio Clay, who wasn't enrolled in the spring, returns in the fall as expected. End

Quick hits

Stadium: Memorial (grass, 81,473). **Site:** Clemson, S.C.
Coach: Tommy Bowden (60-38, 8 years; 78-42 overall, 10 years)
Offensive coordinator: Rob Spence (3rd year)
Defensive coordinator: Vic Koenning (3rd year)

Last league title won: 1991. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2004.

2006 record: 8-5, 5-3/T2nd ACC Atlantic

Music City Bowl: Lost to Kentucky, 28-20

Returning leaders: Rushing—James Davis (195 att., 1,134 yards, 17 TDs). Passing—Cullen Harper (14-20-0, 155 yards, 2 TDs). Receiving—Aaron Kelly (24 rec., 289 yards, 2 TDs).

Ricky Sapp could dominate the way Gaines Adams did last season on a line that has experience—Phillip Merling, Dorell Scott, Jock McKissic and Rashaad Jackson—and should be a strength. A cohesive secondary is essential in Koenning's system, and the Tigers are solid. New cornerback starters Crezdon Butler (three interceptions) Chris Chancellor (three starts) got experience last season. Michael Hamlin and Chris Clemons are one of the ACC's top safety duos.

SPECIAL TEAMS This unit has been a constant headache for Bowden because of blocked kicks and punts. Redshirt freshman Richard Jackson, Clemson's first *Parade* All-American kicker recruit since Chris Gardocki, likely will punt and will compete with Mark Bucholz for the kicking job. Ford is one of the ACC's best return men.

COACHING STAFF Spence and Koenning are young coordinators on the rise. Losing veteran running backs coach Burton Burns to Alabama hurt.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	80	Aaron Kelly (6-5, 180, Jr.)
	21	Xavier Dye* (6-4, 195, Fr.)
LT	79	Barry Richardson (6-7, 320, Sr.)
	61	Chris Hairston (6-6, 310, Fr.)
LG	68	Chris McDuffie (6-5, 330, Sr.)
	55	Bobby Hutchinson (6-3, 305, Jr.)
C	71	Barry Humphries (6-3, 280, So.)
	78	Ben Ramsey (6-4, 270, So.)
RG	74	Brandon Pilgrim (6-6, 300, Sr.)
	65	Thomas Austin (6-4, 305, So.)
RT	67	Christian Capote (6-4, 295, Sr.)
	76	Corey Lambert (6-6, 300, So.)
TE	84	Akeem Robinson (6-5, 260, Jr.)
	82	Durrell Barry (6-4, 250, So.)
WR	13	Tyler Grisham (5-11, 180, Jr.)
	5	Rendrick Taylor (6-2, 230, Jr.)
WR	6	Jacoby Ford (5-9, 180, So.)
	26	La'Donte Harris (5-11, 180, Sr.)
QB	10	Cullen Harper (6-4, 215, Jr.)
	3	Willy Korn* (6-2, 200, Fr.)
RB	1	James Davis (5-11, 205, Jr.)
	28	C.J. Spiller (5-11, 190, So.)
K	23	Mark Buchholz (6-1, 205, Jr.)
KR	6	Jacoby Ford (5-9, 180, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	94	Phillip Merling (6-5, 270, Jr.)
	8	Jamie Cumbie (6-7, 265, So.)
NG	97	Dorell Scott (6-4, 305, Jr.)
	57	Antwon Murchison (6-4, 275, So.)
T	91	Rashaad Jackson (6-3, 290, Jr.)
	50	Jock McKissic (6-6, 295, Jr.)
E	7	Ricky Sapp (6-4, 220, So.)
	98	Kwam Williams (6-3, 245, Sr.)
SLB	20	Tramaine Billie (6-1, 210, Sr.)
	48	Jeremy Campbell (6-2, 215, So.)
MLB	43	Antonio Clay (6-0, 220, Jr.)
	45	Cortney Vincent (6-1, 235, Jr.)
WLB	32	Nick Watkins (6-2, 220, Sr.)
	33	Kavell Conner (6-2, 230, So.)
CB	38	Chris Chancellor (5-9, 170, So.)
	29	Haydrian Lewis (5-11, 185, Jr.)
FS	22	Chris Clemons (6-1, 205, Jr.)
	23	Chris Russell (6-1, 210, Sr.)
SS	25	Michael Hamlin (6-3, 200, Jr.)
	2	DeAndre McDaniel* (6-0, 190, Fr.)
CB	18	Crezdon Butler (6-0, 185, So.)
	36	Byron Maxwell (6-0, 195, Fr.)
P	49	Jimmy Maners (6-1, 190, Jr.)
PR	6	Jacoby Ford (5-9, 180, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-3	▲ Florida State*	27-20
9-8	La.-Monroe	
9-15	Furman	
9-22	at N.C. State	20-14
9-29	at Georgia Tech	31-7
10-6	■ Virginia Tech	7-24
10-20	Central Michigan	
10-27	at Maryland	12-13
11-3	at Duke	
11-10	Wake Forest	27-17
11-17	● Boston College	33-34, 20T
11-24	at South Carolina	28-31

*Monday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

ACC schedule strength: 4th

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Willy Korn. The Tigers better not wait too long to play Korn, but fans should know Clemson won't win its division with a true freshman QB. Tommy Bowden better hope Korn's bad days are fewer than his good ones.

2 DE Ricky Sapp. There's no way your defense can be better when it loses Gaines Adams—unless Sapp puts up Adams-like sacks and stops the run. Sapp has shown signs he will be able to do both.

WAKE FOREST DEMON DEACONS

SN projection **4th, 7-5, Emerald Bowl** National rank **45**

Quick hits

Stadium: Groves (artificial, 31,500). **Site:** Winston-Salem, N.C.
Coach: Jim Grobe (37-35, 6 years; 70-68-1 overall, 12 years)
Offensive coordinator: Steed Lobotzke (5th year, 7th at school)
Defensive coordinator: Dean Hood (7th year)

Last league title won: 2006. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2005.

2006 record: 11-3, 6-2/1st ACC Atlantic

ACC championship game: Beat Georgia Tech, 9-6

Orange Bowl: Lost to Louisville, 24-13

Returning leaders: Rushing—Kenneth Moore (105 att., 507 yards, 2 TDs). Passing—Riley Skinner (171-250-5, 2,051 yards, 9 TDs). Receiving—Kenneth Moore (32 rec., 314 yards, 1 TD).

The surprise of the 2006 college season won't be anyone's pick to defend its ACC title and return to the Orange Bowl. But Wake Forest has enough talent to stay in the title mix in what might be the weakest of the Big 6 conferences. Other ACC teams have more depth and star power, but no team is better coached or more fundamentally sound than the Deacons.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY An unusual misdirection-based attack taps into the speed of wideouts on end arounds and reverses. Wake Forest also has a more efficient downfield attack with Riley Skinner, its best passing quarterback since

career leader Brian Kuklick departed after the 1998 season.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL The Deacons will operate behind four returning starters on a line that includes the ACC's best center in Steve Justice and massive right guard Chris DeGeare. Skinner locked down the quarterback job last year after replacing injured Benjamin Mauk, who has since left the program. There will be two new starting wide receivers in Kevin Marion and Kenny Moore, but Moore made a big impact as a runner and receiver last season, and the position is not a big concern. Tailback Micah Andrews returns after knee surgery, and Kevin Harris is back.

But the runners generating the most excitement are speedy redshirt freshmen Josh Adams and Lucas Caparelli.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Giving up yards in modest chunks is acceptable to a team that is more interested in preventing big plays. Opponents often get frustrated and sputter in the red zone or turn it over trying to force the ball deep.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL A ball-hawking style will be key for the Deacons, who have experience in their secondary. Kevin Patterson might move from cornerback to safety and pair with Chip Vaughn, a new starter with the makeup of a leader. If Patterson moves, either Kerry Major or Brandon Ghee will replace him opposite returning starter Alphonso Smith. New middle linebacker Eric Berry is built like a tank and hits even harder than Jon Abbate, who left early for the NFL. Berry is flanked by capable Aaron Curry and Stanley Arnoux. End Matt Robinson bolsters a line that also returns end Jeremy Thompson and Zach Stukes in the middle.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sam Swank made five field goals of 50 yards or longer and averaged 41.2 yards per punt last season. Marion and Moore are decent kick returners.

Schedule

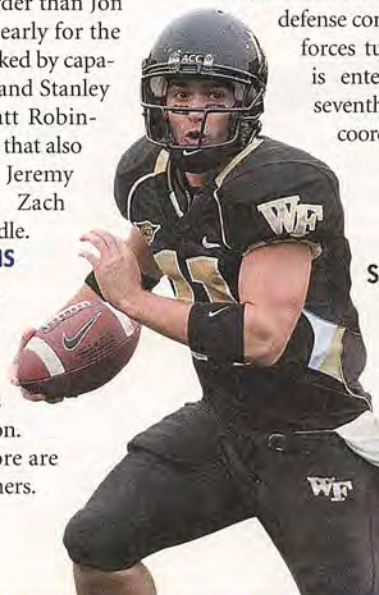
Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at Boston College	21-14
9-8	▲ Nebraska	
9-15	Army	
9-22	● Maryland	38-24
10-6	at Duke	14-13
10-11	Florida State*	30-0
10-20	at Navy	
10-27	North Carolina	24-17
11-3	at Virginia	
11-10	at Clemson	17-27
11-17	N.C. State	25-23
11-24	at Vanderbilt	

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

ACC schedule strength: 12th

COACHING STAFF Jim Grobe has a new 10-year contract and a staff that can squeeze the most out of its players. Steed Lobotzke, feared by opponents for his unusual schemes, is beginning his fifth year as offensive coordinator. Dean Hood, whose defense consistently forces turnovers, is entering his seventh year as coordinator.



Skinner

BOB LEVERONE / SN

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	14	Kevin Marion (5-10, 168, Sr.)
	4	Demir Boldin (5-11, 220, Jr.)
LT	78	Louis Frazier (6-4, 315, Sr.)
	76	Joe Birdsong (6-4, 290, So.)
LG	79	Matthew Brim (6-4, 294, Sr.)
	60	Barrett McMillin (6-3, 288, So.)
C	74	Steve Justice (6-4, 284, Sr.)
	67	Trey Bailey (6-2, 289, So.)
RG	70	Chris DeGeare (6-4, 362, Jr.)
	65	Gage Crews (6-4, 305, So.)
RT	64	Jeff Griffin (6-3, 298, So.)
	77	Boomer Peterson (6-5, 303, So.)
TE	89	John Tereshinski (6-3, 240, Sr.)
	84	Zac Selmon (6-5, 250, Sr.)
WR	21	Kenneth Moore (6-0, 204, Sr.)
	88	Chip Brinkman (6-1, 210, Jr.)
QB	11	Riley Skinner (6-1, 200, So.)
	6	Brett Hodges (6-1, 180, Fr.)
RB	23	Kevin Harris (6-1, 230, So.)
	27	Josh Adams (6-0, 180, Fr.)
FB	35	Rich Belton (6-1, 259, Jr.)
	44	Mike Rinfrette (6-3, 260, So.)
K	38	Sam Swank (6-2, 206, Jr.)
KR	14	Kevin Marion (5-10, 168, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	93	Anthony Davis (6-5, 251, Jr.)
	54	Antonio Wilson (6-1, 255, Jr.)
NG	78	Boo Robinson (6-2, 326, So.)
	58	Michael Carter (6-3, 317, Fr.)
T	51	John Russell (6-3, 250, So.)
	95	Zach Stukes (6-2, 274, Sr.)
E	98	Jeremy Thompson (6-5, 264, Jr.)
	42	Matt Robinson (6-2, 248, Sr.)
SLB	59	Aaron Curry (6-3, 240, Jr.)
	45	Mike Simmons (6-1, 219, Jr.)
MLB	41	Eric Berry (6-1, 288, Jr.)
	52	Dominique Midgett (6-2, 242, So.)
WLB	43	Stanley Arnoux (6-1, 245, Jr.)
	39	Chantz McClinic (5-10, 225, Jr.)
CB	2	Alphonso Smith (5-9, 191, Jr.)
	17	Brandon Ghee (6-0, 182, So.)
FS	9	Chip Vaughn (6-2, 220, Jr.)
	37	Alex Frye (6-3, 190, Fr.)
SS	32	Aaron Mason (5-9, 199, Sr.)
	10	Kevin Patterson (5-10, 185, Jr.)
CB	29	Kerry Major (5-11, 179, Jr.)
	24	Channing Schofield (5-11, 193, So.)
P	38	Sam Swank (6-2, 206, So.)
PR	21	Kenneth Moore (6-0, 204, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 OT Joe Birdsong. He will protect Riley Skinner's blind side and replace Steve Vallos, one of school's best ever at the position. Birdsong plays with a mean streak; if his technique is sound, there shouldn't be a drop-off.

2 FS Alex Frye. The Deacons would get a boost if Frye, a redshirt freshman, can take over at safety so Kevin Patterson can stay at cornerback, his natural position. If Patterson has to switch, Wake could be vulnerable at corner.

MARYLAND TERRAPINS

SN projection **5th, 7-5, International Bowl** National rank **47**

Last season's nine victories dulled the pain of back-to-back 5-6 finishes, but six of the wins were by six or fewer points. The turnover-prone Terps lived on the edge. With division title aspirations and a fairly frisky schedule, they'll have to be better in 2007. They should be because all but nine starters return.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Ralph Friedgen would love to go four-wide and throw deep with regularity. But until one of the quarterbacks proves dependable and the receivers stop dropping passes, the Terps will pound the ball with tailbacks Lance Ball and Keon Lattimore.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Jordan Steffy, the longtime heir apparent at quarterback, finally might get the call with Sam Hollenbach's departure. Steffy had an efficient spring, but he still will have to hold off Florida transfer Josh Portis, who has mobility and a great arm. The winner of that battle will have time to throw, a few good targets and those talented tail-



DAVID DUROCHIK FOR SN

backs. The line lacks depth, but a healthy starting five could be one of the ACC's best. Guards Andrew Crummey and Jaimie Thomas have all-league potential, and center Edwin Williams is huge. Tackle Jared Gaither, who sat out the spring to work on grades, will be the key. Ball and Lattimore both are 223-pound smashers. If they can soften defenses, receivers Darrius Heyward-Bey and Danny Oquendo are deep threats. Isaiah Williams is a big target, as is 6-8 tight end Joey Haynos.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Maryland's 3-4 struggled against the run, the pass and pressuring the quarterback last year. An improved line and more talent at linebacker should ease some of that pain. But solidifying the secondary will be critical.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The pass rush should improve. End Jeremy Navarre, who already has 22 career starts, figures to be more disruptive while run-stopping tackle Dre Moore

Quick hits

Stadium: Byrd (grass, 51,500)

Site: College Park, Md.

Coach: Ralph Friedgen (41-20, 5 years, 15 at school)

Offensive coordinator: Ralph Friedgen (2nd year)

Defensive coordinator: Chris Cosh (2nd year, 3rd at school)

Last league title won: 2001. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2005.

2006 record: 9-4, 5-3/T2nd ACC Atlantic

Champs Sports Bowl: Beat Purdue, 24-7

Returning leaders: Rushing—Lance Ball (174 att., 815 yards, 8 TDs). Passing—Jordan Steffy (0-5-1, 0 yards, 0 TDs). Receiving—Darrius Heyward-Bey (45 rec., 694 yards, 5 TDs).

controls the middle. Behind them, linebacker Erin Henderson appears poised to follow in the footsteps of his brother E.J., a former Butkus Award winner at Maryland. The secondary is a concern with the departure of cornerback Josh Wilson, which makes Isaiah Gardner's recovery from shoulder surgery paramount. Gardner sat out the spring. The team's other top corners, Kevin Barnes and Richard Taylor, have spent most of their careers

on special teams. Safeties J.J. Justice and Christian Varner could be bright spots.

SPECIAL TEAMS All-everything punter Adam Podlesh is gone, as is kicker Dan Ennis. The Terps have some big-legged prospects at punter, and they hope junior Obi Egekeze's first college field goal is a good one.

COACHING STAFF Friedgen regained his genius status, in 2006. But anything less than nine wins will warm up The Friedge's seat again.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	17	Danny Oquendo (6-0, 193, Jr.)
	7	Adrian Cannon (6-2, 204, Fr.)
LT	78	Jared Gaither (6-9, 325, Jr.)
	77	Scott Burley (6-5, 324, Sr.)
LG	76	Jaimie Thomas (6-4, 339, Jr.)
	64	Evan Eastburn (6-1, 310, Fr.)
C	60	Edwin Williams (6-2, 326, Jr.)
	72	Phil Costa (6-3, 297, So.)
RG	63	Andrew Crummey (6-5, 301, Sr.)
	61	Lee Oliver (6-2, 306, Jr.)
RT	75	Dane Randolph (6-5, 312, Jr.)
	67	Jack Griffin (6-7, 308, Sr.)
TE	80	Joey Haynos (6-8, 260, Sr.)
	13	Dan Gronkowski (6-6, 263, Jr.)
WR	8	Darrius Heyward-Bey (6-2, 206, So.)
	84	Isaiah Williams (6-3, 197, Jr.)
QB	19	Jordan Steffy (6-1, 209, Jr.)
	12	Josh Portis (6-3, 201, So.)
RB	44	Lance Ball (5-9, 223, Sr.)
	21	Keon Lattimore (5-11, 223, Sr.)
FB	38	Cory Jackson (6-1, 253, So.)
	46	Steven Pfister (6-2, 234, So.)
K	39	Obi Egekeze (6-2, 224, Jr.)
KR	23	Da'Rel Scott (5-11, 192, Fr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	40	Jeremy Navarre (6-3, 262, Jr.)
	91	Mack Frost (6-5, 252, Jr.)
T	68	Carlos Feliciano (6-4, 307, Sr.)
	90	Travis Ivey (6-4, 330, So.)
T	92	Dre Moore (6-4, 311, Sr.)
	98	Omarr Savage (6-5, 290, Sr.)
LB	55	Trey Covington (6-3, 240, Jr.)
	52	Chris Clinton (6-2, 259, Fr.)
SLB	54	Adrian Moten (6-2, 221, Fr.)
	48	Moise Fokou (6-1, 216, Jr.)
MLB	42	Chase Bullock (6-2, 234, Jr.)
	33	Alex Wujciak (6-3, 248, Fr.)
WLB	1	Erin Henderson (6-3, 236, Jr.)
	34	Dave Philistin (6-2, 231, Jr.)
CB	5	Isaiah Gardner (5-11, 197, Sr.)
	2	Kevin Barnes (6-1, 188, Jr.)
FS	30	J.J. Justice (6-2, 222, Sr.)
	10	Terrell Skinner (6-2, 214, So.)
SS	3	Christian Varner (5-11, 205, Sr.)
	29	Jeff Allen (6-1, 192, Jr.)
CB	6	Anthony Wiseman (5-9, 187, So.)
	9	Richard Taylor (5-11, 193, Jr.)
P	35	Travis Baltz* (6-2, 200, Fr.)
PR	17	Danny Oquendo (6-0, 193, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Villanova	
9-8	at Fla. International	
9-13	▲ West Virginia*	24-45
9-22	at Wake Forest	24-38
9-29	at Rutgers	
10-6	Georgia Tech	23-27
10-20	Virginia	28-26
10-27	Clemson	13-12
11-3	at North Carolina	
11-10	● Boston College	16-38
11-17	■ at Florida State	27-24
11-24	at N.C. State	26-20

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

ACC schedule strength: 10th

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 FB Cory Jackson. The Terps stole this bruiser from Morgantown, W.Va., and he played in all 12 games, starting the final three, as a true freshman. Jackson now is the lead blocker for a potent pair of veteran tailbacks.

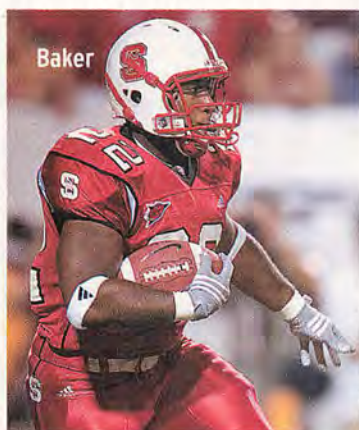
2 OLB Dave Philistin. This prototypical linebacker is ready to crack the already athletic starting unit. Philistin will fit right in with his tailback speed and basketball hops. His 231-pound frame delivers blows like a tractor.

WOLFPACK

SN projection **6th, 5-7**

National rank **70**

Quarterback Daniel Evans says you can tell new coach Tom O'Brien is a former Marine officer because of his no-nonsense attitude. It follows that O'Brien should correct the turnovers and penalties that spotlighted the lack of discipline under predecessor Chuck Amato. The quarterback position could be O'Brien's biggest problem.



BOB LEVERONE / SN

quarterback situation sketchy, O'Brien likely will rely heavily on explosive running backs Andre Brown and Toney Baker. O'Brien is known for getting the most out of his offensive linemen, and he has good ones in Curtis Crouch, Luke Lathan and Kalani Heppie. John Dunlap and Darrell Blackman are good wide receivers, and tight end Anthony Hill is talented when he stays focused.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

New coordinator Mike Archer has a lot of 3-4 defense in his background, but the Wolfpack will play 4-3 because linemen, not linebackers, are the strength of this unit. Archer will incorporate more man-to-man coverage than O'Brien usually uses because N.C. State's defensive backs

are comfortable with it.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Tackle DeMario Pressley, who shows great flexibility, is the leader of a strong line that also features speedy Willie Young and tough Martrel Brown at end. Amato didn't leave O'Brien great talent at linebacker, where LeRue Rumph, Ernest Jones and James Martin have been decent but unspectacular, but sophomore Ray Michel has a chance to be outstanding. DaJuan Morgan and Miguel Scott both make plays at safety, but cornerback could be a problem.

SPECIAL TEAMS Blackman is one of the nation's top kick returners. The Wolfpack won't easily replace John Deraney, who punted and kicked last

Quick hits

Stadium: Carter-Finley (grass, 60,240). **Site:** Raleigh, N.C.
Coach: Tom O'Brien (1st year; 76-45 overall, 10 years)
Offensive coordinator: Dana Bible (1st year, 4th at school)
Defensive coordinator: Mike Archer (1st year)

Last league title won: 1979. **Last bowl appearance:** 2005.

2006 record: 3-9, 2-6/6th ACC Atlantic

Returning leaders: Rushing—Toney Baker (157 att., 688 yards, 6 TDs). Passing—Daniel Evans (163-307-11, 1,843 yards, 6 TDs). Receiving—Anthony Hill (45 rec., 478 yards, 0 TDs).

season. Junior college transfer Jeff Ruiz is the leading candidate at punter. Help could be on the way at kicker; Steve Hauschka is expected to arrive from Middlebury College in Vermont.

COACHING STAFF O'Brien does not have the charismatic personality that N.C. State fans might be used to, but he brings a serious quality this program needs. Boston College ranked second in the ACC in total offense under Bible last season. Getting Archer from Kentucky was a coup for O'Brien.

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	UCF	
9-8	▲ at Boston College	17-15
9-15	Wofford	
9-22	Clemson	14-20
9-29	Louisville	
10-6	■ at Florida State	24-20
10-20	at East Carolina	16-21
10-27	Virginia	7-14
11-3	at Miami	
11-10	● North Carolina	9-23
11-17	at Wake Forest	23-25
11-24	Maryland	20-26

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

ACC schedule strength: 3rd

Depth chart

Offense

Pos. No.	Name
WR 2	Darrell Blackman (5-10, 205, Sr.)
80	Donald Bowens (6-3, 200, So.)
LT 73	Julian Williams (6-5, 292, So.)
61	Matthew White (6-6, 360, Jr.)
LG 69	Kalani Heppie (6-4, 300, Sr.)
60	Meares Green (6-4, 295, Jr.)
C 72	Luke Lathan (6-4, 292, Sr.)
74	Andy Barbee (6-3, 303, So.)
RG 76	Curtis Crouch (6-5, 335, Jr.)
60	Meares Green (6-4, 295, Jr.)
RT 50	Jerrell McCuller (6-7, 330, So.)
61	Matthew White (6-6, 360, Jr.)
TE 83	Anthony Hill (6-6, 265, Sr.)
9	Marcus Stone (6-2, 239, Sr.)
WR 1	John Dunlap (6-1, 218, Sr.)
5	Jarvis Williams (6-4, 205, So.)
QB 7	Daniel Evans (6-2, 191, Jr.)
12	Harrison Beck (6-2, 213, So.)
RB 22	Toney Baker (5-10, 225, Jr.)
24	Andre Brown (6-0, 232, Jr.)
FB 46	Patrick Bedics (6-0, 239, Sr.)
37	John Kane (5-9, 239, Jr.)
K 36	Josh Czajkowski (5-9, 178, Fr.)
KR 2	Darrell Blackman (5-10, 205, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos. No.	Name
E 97	Willie Young (6-5, 230, So.)
11	Audi Augustin (6-2, 250, Fr.)
T 92	DeMario Pressley (6-3, 295, Sr.)
49	Alan-Michael Cash (6-1, 291, So.)
T 91	Ted Larsen (6-2, 272, So.)
93	John Bedics (6-4, 283, Jr.)
E 41	Martrel Brown (6-2, 290, Sr.)
98	Littleton Wright (6-6, 244, Sr.)
LB 52	LeRue Rumph (6-1, 223, Sr.)
45	John Ware (5-11, 210, Fr.)
LB 95	James Martin (6-1, 236, Sr.)
56	Nate Irving (6-1, 207, Fr.)
LB 5	Ernest Jones (6-2, 225, Sr.)
44	Ray Michel (6-0, 224, So.)
CB 8	Jimmie Sutton (5-11, 181, Sr.)
24	Phillip Holloman (5-11, 194, Sr.)
S 7	DaJuan Morgan (6-1, 200, Jr.)
32	Jimmaul Simmons* (6-2, 190, Fr.)
S 25	Miguel Scott (6-0, 195, Sr.)
14	J.C. Neal (6-0, 191, Jr.)
CB 6	Levin Neal (5-11, 191, Jr.)
30	Jeremy Gray (6-2, 186, Jr.)
P	Jeff Ruiz (6-2, 185, So.)
PR 2	Darrell Blackman (5-10, 205, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Justin Burke. This redshirt freshman, who had a strong connection with former coordinator Marc Trestman, is good enough—and smart enough—to win the starting job if he can develop a similar relationship with Dana Bible.

2 DE Martrel Brown. He played sparingly last season, but his size and speed have some observers wondering whether he could be as productive as highly regarded teammate DeMario Pressley.

HOKIES

Tech's toughest schedule in recent memory coincides with its most talented team since the Michael Vick era. If the defense—statistically the nation's best for two years running—stays steady with eight returning starters, Tech will be in the ACC title hunt. If the offense, abysmal at times in 2006, takes even a single step forward, there will be national championship chatter.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Coordinator Bryan Stinespring should be able to use much more of his play-book after a 2006 season in which a patchwork line, freshman tight ends and a first-year starting quarterback made for careful calls. Don't be surprised to see more deep balls and trick plays.

SKILL POSITIONS Fans wanted quarterback Sean Glennon out of the picture after his Chick-fil-A Bowl collapse. They figured that once Ike Whitaker, the more mobile, Vick-like choice, completed his alcohol rehab, the starting job soon would be his. Whitaker does seem to have his life back on track, but he's no closer to the top spot. Glennon, a junior, simply won't surrender. He set team records in the weight room and looked in complete control of the offense during spring drills. That bodes well for the Hokies, who boast a sterling senior receiving corps just waiting to show off. Eddie Royal is a game-breaking speedster. Justin Harper is a high-flier, specializing in spectacular catches. And few receivers are tougher to tackle than Josh Morgan. If the passing game becomes a real threat, all-ACC tailback Branden Ore could put up monster numbers.

OFFENSIVE LINE This group, which strug-



Adibi

BOB LEVERONE / SN

Quick hits

Stadium: Lane (grass, 66,233).
Site: Blacksburg, Va.

Coach: Frank Beamer (156-82-2, 20 years; 198-105-4 overall, 26 years)
Offensive coordinator: Bryan Stinespring (6th year, 15th at school).

Defensive coordinator: Bud Foster (13th year, 21st at school).

Last league title won: 2004.

Last year not in a bowl: 1992.

2006 record: 10-3, 6-2/2nd ACC Coastal

Chick-fil-A Bowl: Lost to Georgia, 31-24

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 OT Ed Wang. The Hokies need to get better on the line, and his switch from tight end should help. Wang, the son of former Chinese Olympians, is a nimble 304-pounder who looked good during spring drills.

2 SS Kam Chancellor. After playing cornerback last fall as a true freshman, the athletic Chancellor moves to his more natural "rover" spot to claim one of just three vacant starting jobs on Tech's devastating defense.

An ACC coach says ...

QB **Sean Glennon** is just average. He had some good games and was good enough, but he didn't overwhelm me. ... RB **Branden Ore** sets up his blocks well. He understands how to run. Plus, he has a little shake to him and is powerful. ... Their offensive line just mauls you. That's one of the reasons they run the ball so well. ... Their defense was unbelievable last year. They were huge, and they really hit. They're physical, and they get after you, brother. ... They were the best football team we played in the ACC last year.

gled a lot in 2006, figures to improve. Duane Brown has moved from right to left tackle, where the potential All-American will protect Glennon's blindside. Right guard Sergio Render, a brutally strong blocker who started all last season as a true freshman, and center Ryan Shuman should be solid at their spots. Ed Wang's move from tight end to tackle gives Tech a viable option there and leaves only two questions: Who will start at left guard, and will the Hokies have enough quality depth? The answers could come from a strong crop of incoming freshmen.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Bud Foster's bunch will blitz from every position and force a lot of mental mistakes. With no apparent weak links in this year's unit, Foster has the luxury of being even more aggressive than usual.

FRONT SEVEN Few fronts will be better. Vince Hall, a vicious tackler, and Xavier Adibi, who is fast enough to run with receivers, form one of the best linebacker duos in the country. End Chris Ellis should return to his sack-happy form after offseason shoulder surgery, and tackles Carlton Powell and Barry Booker are bulldozers in the middle. The Hokies do have to replace one end and their "whip" linebacker, but there are quality candidates. Former walk-on Orion Martin was one of the team's spring standouts at end. Corey Gordon finally will get his chance to shine at whip. Always an imposing physical presence, Gordon suddenly seems to have

grasped Tech's scheme and become a tackling terror in practice. Depth will be a question across the board, but several talented youngsters have shown flashes.

SECONDARY The Hokies are set at corner. Brandon Flowers was a model of consistency as a sophomore last season, and former super-recruit Victor "Macho" Harris had a breakout spring on the other side. Roland Minor, who started every game in 2005, now is the leading backup. Free safety D.J. Parker has played in every game but one since 2004, and rover Kam Chancellor, only a sophomore, might be the most athletic player on Tech's defense. Passing yards won't be easy to come by against the Hokies.

SPECIAL TEAMS This might be Tech's biggest concern after losing starters at kicker, punter and long snapper. For Beamerball to get back to speed, a field goal kicker will have to emerge from a pack that includes last year's kickoff specialist, Jared Develli. Punting duties should be handled by Brent Bowden, the team's No. 2 man for two years. On returns, the trio of Royal, Morgan and Harris could produce some breathtaking moments.

COACHING STAFF Ever-steady head man Frank Beamer and his two coordinators have all been in Blacksburg at least 15 years. They've managed to maintain a winning tradition—which includes 14 consecutive bowl appearances—while tweaking where necessary to keep the program among the nation's elite.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Branden Ore	241	1,137	4.7	16
Kenny Lewis	54	215	4.0	2

Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD
Sean Glennon	170-302-11	2,191	11

Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Josh Morgan	33	448	13.6	4
Eddie Royal	31	497	16.0	3

Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Eddie Royal	42	735	17.5	1

Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Jared Develli	—	—	0	1	0

Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.
Vince Hall	61	67	128	10.5/35
Xavier Adibi	29	53	82	6.5/18
Barry Booker	16	36	52	7/41

Sacks: Chris Ellis (4.5)

Interceptions: Victor Harris (4)



Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	81	Justin Harper (6-4, 204, Sr.)
	2	Josh Morgan (6-1, 219, Sr.)
LT	76	Duane Brown (6-5, 310, Sr.)
	71	Aaron Brown (6-6, 300, Fr.)
LG	67	Nick Marshman (6-5, 351, Jr.)
	51	Matt Welsh (6-4, 295, Jr.)
C	58	Ryan Shuman (6-3, 318, Jr.)
	60	Beau Warren (6-3, 275, Fr.)
RG	70	Sergio Render (6-3, 320, So.)
	64	Richard Graham (6-6, 290, So.)
RT	77	Ed Wang (6-5, 304, So.)
	57	Clark Crum (6-7, 280, Fr.)
TE	8	Greg Boone (6-3, 281, So.)
	83	Sam Wheeler (6-3, 252, So.)
WR	4	Eddie Royal (5-10, 181, Sr.)
	19	Josh Hyman (5-11, 192, Sr.)
QB	7	Sean Glennon (6-4, 221, Jr.)
	3	Ike Whitaker (6-4, 204, So.)
RB	28	Branden Ore (5-11, 202, Jr.)
	20	Kenny Lewis (5-9, 195, So.)
FB	39	Carlton Weatherford (5-10, 230, Sr.)
	42	Kenny Jefferson (5-9, 222, So.)
K	92	Jud Dunlevy (5-9, 188, Sr.)
KR	4	Eddie Royal (5-10, 181, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	East Carolina		5-0
9-8	■ at LSU		1-0
9-15	Ohio		3-0
9-22	William & Mary		5-0
9-29	North Carolina	35-10	3-2
10-6	at Clemson	24-7	4-1
10-13	at Duke	36-0	5-0
10-25	Boston College*	3-22	3-2
11-1	▲ at Georgia Tech*	27-38	2-2
11-10	Florida State		0-5
11-17	● Miami	17-10	3-2
11-24	at Virginia	17-0	4-1

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

ACC schedule strength: 9

>The Series Virginia (46-37-5): Being an elite program means dominating your in-state foe. Mission accomplished for the Hokies. In fact, a win here could be what pushes Al Groh out the door.

>The Showdown vs. Miami: The winner figures to clinch the Coastal Division title. If the Hokies' quarterback situation is settled, they should cruise. However, Tech has lost two of the last three meetings against Miami in Blacksburg.

>The Smack Beware Baton Rouge. A win at LSU will stamp Tech a legit national title contender. But more than anything, the Hokies' success will be defined by the final five games. Keep an eye on the trip to Georgia Tech. The Hokies must run well.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	49	Chris Ellis (6-5, 260, Sr.)
	47	Nekos Brown (6-2, 240, So.)
T	99	Carlton Powell (6-2, 294, Sr.)
	75	Kory Robertson (6-2, 335, Sr.)
T	59	Barry Booker (6-4, 280, Sr.)
	95	Cordarrow Thompson (6-2, 334, So.)
E	90	Orion Martin (6-2, 260, Jr.)
	56	Demetrius Taylor (6-0, 233, So.)
OLB	13	Corey Gordon (6-2, 226, Sr.)
	41	Cam Martin (6-1, 207, So.)
ILB	9	Vince Hall (6-0, 240, Sr.)
	33	Brett Warren (6-0, 227, Jr.)
ILB	11	Xavier Adibi (6-2, 226, Sr.)
	45	Purnell Sturdivant (5-10, 216, Jr.)
CB	1	Victor Harris (6-0, 200, Jr.)
	21	Rashad Carmichael (5-10, 182, Fr.)
FS	25	D.J. Parker (5-11, 194, Sr.)
	23	Mario Edwards (6-2, 200, Fr.)
SS	17	Kam Chancellor (6-4, 217, So.)
	24	Dorian Porch (5-11, 203, So.)
CB	18	Brandon Flowers (5-10, 190, Jr.)
	22	Stephan Virgil (5-11, 185, So.)
P	97	Brent Bowden (6-2, 197, So.)
PR	4	Eddie Royal (5-10, 181, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

HURRICANES

Coach Larry Coker was fired after a 7-6 season. Enter new coach Randy Shannon, who had been defensive coordinator. Shannon promises a new attitude and a return of Miami's old swagger. The offense has been the problem—and probably will continue to be. The schedule is tough (road games against

Oklahoma, Florida State, Virginia Tech and Boston College and a nonconference home game against Texas A&M), and an ACC division title looks out of reach.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY New coordinator Patrick Nix, who comes from Georgia Tech, promises a balanced offense. There's a nice group of tailbacks, but all other positions have

Quick hits

Stadium: Orange Bowl (grass, 72,319).
Site: Miami.

Coach: Randy Shannon (1st year, 14th at school)

Offensive coordinator: Patrick Nix (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Tim Walton (1st year, 4th at school)

Last league title won: 2003 (tie, Big East).

Last year not in a bowl: 1997.

2006 record: 7-6, 3-5/4th ACC Coastal

MPC Computers Bowl: Beat Nevada, 21-20

question marks attached.

SKILL POSITIONS Tailback Javaris James, Edgerrin's cousin, lived up to his high school hype last season; he has a good burst and is tough enough to run between the tackles. Depth behind James is solid, though it's likely that a true freshman (maybe Graig Cooper) could work his way into the rotation. The bigger question is who will hand the ball to James. Neither Kyle Wright nor Kirby Freeman distinguished himself in the spring. Wright has all the tools but regressed last season before being injured. Freeman has good mobility but wasn't impressive in four starts. True freshman Robert Marve, Florida's Mr. Football last year, also is in the mix.

The biggest problem for the quarterback will be a lackluster receiving corps. Lance Leggett has great speed but frequently drifts through games. Sam Shields has the talent to be a go-to guy. It's vital that at least one true



JAY DROWNS / SN

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB Graig Cooper. A heralded prep school product, Cooper is a scary combination of speed and strength. He must form a formidable running duo with Javaris James to take pressure off a shaky passing game.

2 OLB Colin McCarthy. He played sparingly as a true freshman but came on strong in the spring and is contending for a starting role on the outside. Even if he doesn't start this year, McCarthy has the look of a future star.

An ACC coach says ...

Miami had the best defense in the league last year, and it should be great again. ... FS **Kenny Phillips** is very good. He can do a lot of things and has good size and speed. ... DE **Calais Campbell** is a Gaines Adams type of guy. He can come off the edge and make plays for you against the run or the pass. ... They have been playing a little more man coverage in the last season or two, but they still go with the 4-3 and the two deep. ... Nobody on their offense impressed me last year. They didn't stand out, even their receivers or RB **Javaris James**.

freshman play early because the other veterans are pedestrian. DajLeon Farr will be the new tight end.

OFFENSIVE LINE Left tackle Jason Fox started as a true freshman and proved to be a quick study; he played mostly on the right side last year and could be Miami's next great lineman. Right tackle Reggie Youngblood is changing sides, too; if he can stay healthy, the Hurricanes will have two good tackles. The interior is another story. Derrick Morse, the best interior lineman last season, may move from guard to center. The guard spots won't be decided until fall drills, though Andrew Bain likely will start again. Depth is a big concern, making it likely that at least one freshman (probably Harland Gunn) will play right away.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY This still is Shannon's defense, which means the Canes will attack as soon as they get off the bus. The strategy can lead to big plays for both sides; in the last few seasons, Miami has been slow to adjust when opponents take advantage of their schemes.

FRONT SEVEN Ends Calais Campbell and Eric Moncur could be dominating. Campbell recorded 10½ sacks last season and should reach that number again. Reserve end Courtney Harris also looked good in the spring. There are a lot of bodies at tackle, but no one really stands out. Teraz McCray is good against the run, and redshirt freshman Josh Holmes, though undersized, has great burst. Linebacker should be a strength.

Darryl Sharpton has the quickness and lateral movement to be a star in the middle, and the two outside slots will be a rotation among Glenn Cook, Tavares Gooden and Colin McCarthy, who has star potential.

SECONDARY Solid safeties, iffy cornerbacks. Free safety Kenny Phillips might be the best in the nation at his position; he has great instincts, hits hard and has good hands. Lovon Ponder is the strong safety after Anthony Reddick blew out his knee playing pickup basketball. Reddick also could've played some cornerback. Randy Phillips and Glenn Sharpe are the incumbent corners, but neither stood out last season. Sophomore Chavez Grant has great speed and could force himself into the starting role. The Canes also recruited well here, so expect some help from true freshmen.

SPECIAL TEAMS There will be a new kicker and punter, which is worrisome. Redshirt freshman Matt Bosher might get both jobs; then again, former walk-on Daren Daly might prevail. The return games were mediocre last season and that's unacceptable for a team that prides itself on speed.

COACHING STAFF Shannon might be in his first season as head coach, but he's still under pressure to produce. Miami fans expect 10- and 11-win seasons. Shannon brought in five new assistants, but only one (Nix) comes from a team that played in a bowl last season. Shannon is a defensive guru, but he needs to get his offense fixed—and fast.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Javaris James	175	802	4.7	4
Charlie Jones	61	206	3.4	4

Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD
Kyle Wright	152-250-7	1,655	8

Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Lance Leggett	38	584	15.4	4
Sam Shields	37	501	13.5	4

Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Bruce Johnson	38	512	13.5	0

Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
None					

Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.
Calais Campbell	49	35	84	20.5/75
Kenny Phillips	53	18	71	6/10
Glenn Cook	32	32	64	4/12

Sacks: Campbell (10.5)

Interceptions: Phillips (4)



Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	9	Lance Leggett (6-3, 188, Sr.)
	13	Ryan Hill (5-11, 188, So.)
LT	64	Jason Fox (6-6, 265, So.)
	79	Chris Barney (6-5, 340, So.)
LG	72	Andrew Bain (6-3, 330, Sr.)
	67	Tyrone Byrd (6-5, 295, Jr.)
C	70	A.J. Trump (6-3, 294, So.)
	71	Derrick Morse (6-4, 326, Sr.)
RG	71	Derrick Morse (6-4, 326, Sr.)
	76	Chris Rutledge (6-5, 325, Jr.)
RT	77	Reggie Youngblood (6-5, 305, Jr.)
	73	Cyril Wimbs (6-3, 335, Sr.)
TE	11	DajLeon Farr (6-5, 248, Jr.)
	88	Chris Zellner (6-2, 238, Jr.)
WR	83	Sam Shields (6-0, 177, So.)
	87	Khalil Jones (6-2, 218, Jr.)
QB	3	Kyle Wright (6-4, 220, Sr.)
	7	Kirby Freeman (6-3, 215, Jr.)
RB	5	Javaris James (6-0, 210, So.)
	2	Graig Cooper* (6-0, 195, Fr.)
FB	41	Jerrell Mabry (6-1, 266, So.)
	42	Gabriel Diaz (6-0, 214, Sr.)
K	25	Matt Bosher (6-0, 170, Fr.)
KR	22	Bruce Johnson (5-11, 177, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Marshall		
9-8	■ at Oklahoma		3-2
9-15	Fla. International	35-0	1-0
9-20	Texas A&M*		0-1
9-29	Duke	20-15	3-1
10-6	at North Carolina	27-7	3-2
10-13	● Georgia Tech	23-30	2-3
10-20	▲ at Florida State	10-13	3-2
11-3	N.C. State		4-1
11-10	Virginia	7-17	3-1
11-17	at Virginia Tech	10-17	2-3
11-24	at Boston College	17-14	5-0

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

ACC schedule strength: 8th

>**The Series** Florida State (29-22):

This rivalry was THE game of the 1990s, but it has lost luster this decade. Still, this year's meeting will go a long way toward pushing the winner back in the right direction.

>**The Showdown** at Virginia Tech: If the Canes' maligned offense is flying high when these two meet, a lot could be on the line—including a berth in the ACC title game.

>**The Smack** Too much, too fast. No doubt, Miami fans like to talk smack. And they expect their Canes to back it up. But winning big with this schedule is asking too much from a team in transition. An already difficult ACC slate is compounded by rugged nonconference games against Oklahoma and Texas A&M.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	94	Eric Moncur (6-2, 260, Jr.)
	49	Courtney Harris (6-3, 260, So.)
T	96	Antonio Dixon (6-3, 335, Jr.)
	93	Dwayne Hendricks (6-4, 280, Jr.)
T	54	Teraz McCray (6-1, 300, Sr.)
	92	Josh Holmes (6-2, 270, Fr.)
E	81	Calais Campbell (6-8, 282, Jr.)
	47	Vegas Franklin (6-3, 255, Sr.)
SLB	44	Colin McCarthy (6-3, 222, So.)
	52	Tavares Gooden (6-2, 238, Sr.)
MLB	50	Darryl Sharpton (5-11, 227, So.)
	51	Romeo Davis (6-3, 229, Sr.)
WLB	55	Glenn Cook (6-0, 215, Sr.)
	48	Spencer Adkins (5-11, 233, Jr.)
CB	4	Glenn Sharpe (6-0, 187, Sr.)
	24	Chavez Grant (5-11, 174, So.)
FS	1	Kenny Phillips (6-2, 202, Jr.)
	28	Willie Cooper (6-1, 211, Sr.)
SS	35	Lovon Ponder (6-0, 207, Jr.)
	28	Willie Cooper (6-1, 211, Sr.)
CB	6	Randy Phillips (6-0, 195, Jr.)
	24	Chavez Grant (5-11, 174, So.)
P	17	Daren Daly (6-1, 173, Jr.)
PR	22	Bruce Johnson (5-11, 177, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman



GEORGIA TECH

YELLOW JACKETS

SN projection 3rd, 7-5, Champs Sports Bowl National rank 37

Georgia Tech pulled off a big surprise last season when it won the Coastal Division title before losing in the ACC title game. If new quarterback Taylor Bennett comes through, the Jackets could surprise again. They probably won't win the division, but an 11th consecutive bowl appearance beckons.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY New coordinator John Bond predicted before spring practice that Tech could have one of the nation's top 20 offenses. That sounds overly optimistic, but given the returning talent, Tech should have a strong rushing attack, which is what coach Chan Gailey likes.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL The return of four starting linemen, including star tackle Andrew Gardner, is reason for optimism. They will open holes for a deep group of tailbacks headed by Tashard Choice, who is underrated nationally despite rushing for 1,473 yards last season. Fullback Mike Cox is an excellent blocker, and there's



BOB LEVERONE / SN

solid depth at tailback behind Choice. Bennett has the tools to succeed, but he will be throwing to a suspect group of receivers. James Johnson was good last season, perhaps because high NFL pick Calvin Johnson got most of the attention. Can James Johnson be a No. 1? No other receiver has done anything at the college level.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Jon Tenuta loves to blitz. He's a master at disguising his schemes and comes at opposing quarterbacks from all angles. As long as he's around, Tech will have a sound defense.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Eight starters return to a defense that features two stars: middle linebacker Philip Wheeler and strong safety Jamal Lewis. Wheeler was projected for stardom last season and delivered; Lewis emerged from nowhere to become an all-league performer. There's a nice group at end with Adamm Oliver, Darrell Robertson and Michael

Quick hits

Stadium: Bobby Dodd (grass, 55,000). **Site:** Atlanta.
Coach: Chan Gailey (37-27, 5 years; 61-38 overall, 8 years)
Offensive coordinator: John Bond (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Jon Tenuta (6th year)

Last league title won: 1998 (tie). **Last year not in a bowl:** 1996.

2006 record: 9-5, 7-1/1st ACC Coastal

ACC championship game: Lost to Wake Forest, 9-6

Gator Bowl: Lost to West Virginia, 38-35

Returning leaders: Rushing—Tashard Choice (297 att., 1,473 yards, 12 TDs). Passing—Taylor Bennett (35-58-2, 523 yards, 5 TDs). Receiving—James Johnson (39 rec., 608 yards, 7 TDs).

Johnson, and tackle Darryl Richard also is solid. The other tackle spot is a concern. Djay Jones teams with Lewis in an excellent safety duo. There is solid depth behind Wheeler at linebacker, and the cornerbacks are experienced if not spectacular.

SPECIAL TEAMS Punter Durant Brooks has an All-American leg, as last season's 45.5-yard average suggests. But kicker Travis Bell is inconsistent: great as a freshman, poor as a sopho-

more and OK as a junior; he has struggled with kicks beyond 40 yards (9-of-22). The return men won't be selected until fall camp.

COACHING STAFF Gailey quieted most critics last season. He has a good staff, especially Tenuta, and Bond should fit in nicely. The staff also answered questions on the recruiting trail by reeling in what many consider the ACC's best class; for once, it is loaded with in-state prospects.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	89	James Johnson (6-0, 190, Jr.)
	15	Correy Earls (6-0, 192, Fr.)
LT	64	Andrew Gardner (6-6, 298, Jr.)
	75	Jason Hill (6-4, 290, So.)
LG	61	Matt Rhodes (6-3, 280, Sr.)
	77	Dan Voss (6-4, 305, So.)
C	60	Kevin Tuminello (6-4, 292, Sr.)
	74	Trey Dunmon (6-4, 305, So.)
RG	73	Nate McManus (6-3, 300, Sr.)
	62	Jacob Lonowski (6-5, 300, Jr.)
RT	53	A.J. Smith (6-7, 300, Jr.)
	71	Cord Howard (6-5, 300, So.)
TE	84	Colin Peek (6-6, 250, So.)
	81	Brad Sellers (6-2, 265, So.)
WR	8	Demaryius Thomas (6-3, 220, Fr.)
	5	Greg Smith (6-3, 195, So.)
QB	13	Taylor Bennett (6-3, 215, Jr.)
	16	Steven Threet* (6-5, 230, Fr.)
RB	22	Tashard Choice (6-1, 205, Sr.)
	3	Rashaun Grant (5-10, 200, Sr.)
FB	40	Mike Cox (6-1, 250, Sr.)
	38	Quincy Kelly (6-0, 230, Fr.)
K	87	Travis Bell (6-0, 220, Sr.)
KR	20	Jamaal Evans (5-8, 196, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	90	Darrell Robertson (6-5, 245, Sr.)
	97	Robert Hall (6-3, 245, So.)
T	95	Darryl Richard (6-4, 285, Jr.)
	94	Elris Anyaibe (6-3, 275, Jr.)
T	99	Vance Walker (6-2, 275, So.)
	63	Marcus Harris (6-1, 280, Sr.)
E	42	Adamm Oliver (6-4, 270, Sr.)
	93	Michael Johnson (6-7, 250, Jr.)
SLB	57	Shane Bowen (6-1, 225, So.)
	12	Anthony Barnes (6-3, 235, Fr.)
MLB	41	Philip Wheeler (6-2, 230, Sr.)
	52	Travis Chambers (5-11, 232, Jr.)
WLB	58	Gary Guyton (6-2, 240, Sr.)
	7	Tony Clark (6-1, 200, Jr.)
CB	34	Avery Roberson (6-2, 200, Sr.)
	6	Pat Clark (5-11, 185, Sr.)
FS	23	Djay Jones (6-1, 200, Sr.)
	47	Jake Blackwood (6-1, 188, So.)
SS	4	Jamal Lewis (6-0, 199, Sr.)
	37	Joe Gaston (5-11, 195, Sr.)
CB	32	Jahi Word-Daniels (6-0, 185, Jr.)
	26	Dominique Reese (5-11, 180, Fr.)
P	39	Durant Brooks (6-1, 202, Sr.)
PR	6	Pat Clark (5-11, 185, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	▲ at Notre Dame	10-14
9-8	Samford	38-6
9-15	Boston College	
9-22	at Virginia	24-7
9-29	Clemson	7-31
10-6	at Maryland	27-23
10-13	● at Miami	30-23
10-20	Army	
11-1	■ Virginia Tech*	38-27
11-10	at Duke	49-21
11-17	North Carolina	7-0
11-24	Georgia	12-15

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

ACC schedule strength: 7th

2-POINT conversion
 GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Taylor Bennett. He has good size and a strong arm, which he displayed in the Gator Bowl as a replacement for suspended starter Reggie Ball. The only question is whether Bennett will get any help from suspect receivers.

2 DT Vance Walker. Look for this 275-pound sophomore to fill the one open starting spot on the line. Quickness is his strong suit, though that won't necessarily keep him on the field in passing situations.



VIRGINIA

CAVALIERS

SN projection **4th, 7-5, Music City Bowl** National rank **43**

Last season, Al Groh told reporters he was playing with next season's team—suggesting, presumably, that a roster heavy with youngsters would pay dividends in 2007. But even with 19 starters returning, there is uncertainty at quarterback, a new starter at tailback and no proven threat on offense. On the bright side, the defense is loaded.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY With a grown-up line, Groh can return to his staple offense: pounding the ball on the ground and throwing to the tight ends, who had to stay home and block too often last year. The Cavs' attack should be conservative because of questions at wideout and quarterback.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Quarterback Jameel Sewell started the final nine games as a red-shirt freshman and showed flashes of greatness.

Santi

DAVID DUROCHIK FOR SN



Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	26	Cary Koch (6-0, 198, Jr.)
	22	Staton Jobe (6-0, 177, Fr.)
LT	75	Eugene Monroe (6-6, 315, Jr.)
	76	Zak Stair (6-6, 298, Jr.)
LG	71	Brandon Albert (6-7, 315, Jr.)
	79	Gordie Sammis (6-4, 289, Sr.)
C	63	Jordy Lipsey (6-3, 280, Sr.)
	64	Jack Shields (6-5, 252, Fr.)
RG	77	Ian-Yates Cunningham (6-3, 290, Jr.)
	65	B.J. Cabbell (6-6, 300, Fr.)
RT	61	Will Barker (6-7, 306, So.)
	76	Zak Stair (6-6, 298, Jr.)
TE	86	Tom Santi (6-5, 250, Jr.)
	88	Jonathan Stupar (6-3, 254, Jr.)
WR	80	Maurice Covington (6-4, 215, Jr.)
	89	Chris Dalton (6-2, 172, Fr.)
QB	10	Jameel Sewell (6-3, 219, So.)
	6	Marc Verica (6-2, 190, Fr.)
RB	37	Cedric Peerman (5-10, 205, Jr.)
	32	Keith Payne (6-3, 243, Fr.)
FB	31	Rashawn Jackson (6-1, 254, So.)
	25	Josh Zidenberg (6-0, 213, Sr.)
K	9	Chris Gould (6-1, 204, Sr.)
KR	37	Cedric Peerman (5-10, 205, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	95	Jeffrey Fitzgerald (6-3, 279, So.)
	93	Alex Field (6-7, 288, Jr.)
NT	94	Allen Billyk (6-4, 287, Sr.)
	98	Nate Collins (6-2, 281, So.)
E	91	Chris Long (6-4, 284, Sr.)
	99	Sean Gottschalk (6-4, 262, Fr.)
OLB	51	Clint Sintim (6-3, 256, Jr.)
	56	Olu Hall (6-3, 230, So.)
ILB	54	Jon Copper (6-0, 232, Jr.)
	42	Darnell Carter (6-3, 244, Fr.)
ILB	58	Antonio Appleby (6-4, 248, Jr.)
	33	John Bivens (6-2, 213, Fr.)
OLB	57	Jermaine Dias (6-1, 237, Sr.)
	41	Aaron Clark (6-5, 254, Jr.)
CB	28	Mike Brown (5-9, 180, Jr.)
	4	Vic Hall (5-9, 184, So.)
S	22	Byron Glaspy (5-11, 203, Jr.)
	27	Jamaal Jackson (6-3, 212, Sr.)
S	30	Nate Lyles (6-0, 203, Jr.)
	17	Brandon Woods (6-2, 214, So.)
CB	26	Chris Cook (6-2, 204, Jr.)
	1	Trey Womack (5-11, 177, Fr.)
P	16	Ryan Weigand (6-2, 181, Sr.)
PR	28	Mike Brown (5-9, 180, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Scott (artificial, 61,500). **Site:** Charlottesville, Va.
Coach: Al Groh (42-33, 6 years, 9 at school; 68-73 overall, 12 years)
Offensive coordinator: Mike Groh (2nd year, 7th at school)
Defensive coordinator: Mike London (2nd year, 6th at school)
Last league title won: 1995 (tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 2005.
2006 record: 5-7, 4-4/3rd ACC Coastal

Returning leaders: Rushing—Jameel Sewell (95 att., 200 yards, 4 TDs). Passing—Jameel Sewell (143-247-6, 1,342 yards, 5 TDs). Receiving—Kevin Ogletree (52 rec., 582 yards, 4 TDs).

But he also was inconsistent and missed spring practice with a wrist injury, leaving the door open for strong-armed freshman Peter Lalich. At tailback, look for Keith Payne to share snaps with Cedric Peerman, who has an edge in experience but so far has been used mostly as a kick returner.

The tailbacks will run behind an experienced line that includes all-conference guard Branden Albert and left tackle Eugene Monroe, the nation's top recruit two years ago. The receiving corps lost its biggest threat when Kevin Ogletree blew out his knee in spring drills. So the top two returning wideouts caught seven total passes last year. Tight ends Tom Santi and Jonathan Stupar need to shoulder more of the load.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Mike London returned to the Cavs last season after a year in the NFL and turned up the juice on a 3-4 defense that was quicker and more aggressive. With most of the unit returning, look for an increase in intensity.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The line will be nasty, with All-American candidate Chris Long back at one end and Jeffrey Fitzgerald coming off the other edge. All four linebackers return, led on the inside by juniors Jon Copper, last year's leading tackler, and

Antonio Appleby. The secondary is sparked by heavy hitter Nate Lyles at safety and junior Chris Cook at cornerback. Vic Hall and Mike Brown are candidates at the open corner slot. **SPECIAL TEAMS** Chris Gould did it all—punts, field goals and kickoffs—last year, but

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at Wyoming	13-12, OT
9-8	Duke	37-0
9-15	at North Carolina	23-0
9-22	• Georgia Tech	7-24
9-29	Pitt	13-38
10-6	at Middle Tennessee	
10-13	Connecticut	
10-20	at Maryland	26-28
10-27	at N.C. State	14-7
11-3	Wake Forest	
11-10	▲ at Miami	17-7
11-24	■ Virginia Tech	0-17

■ Toughest game • Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

ACC schedule strength: 11

none of it particularly well. So Ryan Weigand might handle punts, and incoming freshman Chris Hincebein will contend for field-goal duty. The return game should be solid with Brown and Hall.

COACHING STAFF Groh recruits well enough; now he must show he can turn that talent into improvement. It's also showtime for Groh's son, Mike, who struggled in his first year as offensive coordinator. The Cavs need to score more to avoid a Bowdenesque family drama.

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB Keith Payne. This redshirt freshman, who has yet to take a handoff, already is a fan favorite. At 6-3 and 243 pounds, Payne is a punishing runner who was very impressive in spring practices.

2 CB Vic Hall. A prolific prep quarterback, Hall has adjusted to his new position and will battle for a starting job. The athletic sophomore gained attention in his redshirt freshman season as a special teams standout.

TAR HEELS

SN projection **5th, 4-8**National rank **84**

Hiring coveted coach Butch Davis to replace John Bunting and signing a highly regarded recruiting class give North Carolina hope for the future. But an almost ridiculous lack of returning talent and a schedule that includes eight bowl teams from 2006 bears little immediate promise.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Davis will use the same strategies that helped him rebuild the Miami Hurricanes, making frequent use of tight ends and featuring his running backs. That could take some pressure off North Carolina's most vulnerable position—quarterback.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Incoming freshman Mike Paulus could win the starting quarterback job after Cam Sexton struggled last fall. But redshirt freshman T.J. Yates showed promise in the spring and could be Paulus' top competition. Running back also could be a problem after Barrington Edwards was suspended indefinitely before spring drills. Wideout Hakeem Nicks has big-play ability and is the team's best skill player. Add in Brooks Foster and Brandon Tate—who has enormous potential—and wideout is the team's strongest position. Three starters, led by tackle

Quick hits

Stadium: Kenan Memorial (grass, 60,000). **Site:** Chapel Hill, N.C.
Coach: Butch Davis (1st year; 51-20 overall, 6 years)
Offensive coordinator: John Shoop (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Chuck Pagano (1st year)

Last league title won: 1980. **Last bowl appearance:** 2004.

2006 record: 3-9, 2-6/5th ACC Coastal

Returning leaders: Rushing—Barrington Edwards (91 att., 330 yards, 2 TDs). Passing—Joe Dailey (112-195-10, 1,316 yards, 7 TDs). Receiving—Hakeem Nicks (39 rec., 660 yards, 4 TDs).

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	James Madison	
9-8	• at East Carolina	
9-15	Virginia	0-23
9-22	at South Florida	20-37
9-29	■ at Virginia Tech	10-35
10-6	Miami	7-27
10-13	South Carolina	
10-27	at Wake Forest	17-24
11-3	▲ Maryland	
11-10	at N.C. State	23-9
11-17	at Georgia Tech	0-7
11-24	Duke	45-44

■ Toughest game • Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

ACC schedule strength: 6th

Garrett Reynolds, return on a modestly talented line.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Davis wants to attack. "No one dictates to us," he says. "We dictate to them." That was easier to do with the athletes he had at Miami.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The line should be solid, with heralded freshman tackle Marvin Austin joining talented seniors Hilee Taylor and Kentwan Balmer. But North Carolina does not have ACC-caliber talent at linebacker or defensive back. Durell Mapp and Mark Paschal have been the best of the bunch at linebacker. Bunting always praised free safety Cooter Arnold's talent. Free safety Trimane Goddard, who returns from a foot injury that sidelined him in 2006, must play a big leadership role.

Nicks



BOB LEVERONE / SN

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	88	Hakeem Nicks (6-1, 210, So.)
	12	Joe Dailey (6-1, 205, Sr.)
LT	72	Kyle Jolly (6-6, 305, So.)
	78	Andre Barbour (6-6, 298, So.)
LG	76	Bryon Bishop (6-3, 300, Jr.)
	73	Aaron Stahl (6-3, 295, So.)
C	64	Scott Lenahan (6-1, 290, Sr.)
	63	Ben Lemming (6-5, 300, Jr.)
RG	79	Calvin Darity (6-3, 295, Jr.)
	70	Alan Pelc (6-6, 320, Fr.)
RT	75	Garrett Reynolds (6-7, 300, Jr.)
	66	Mike Ingersoll (6-4, 265, Fr.)
TE	89	Richard Quinn (6-4, 235, So.)
	84	Vince Jacobs (6-6, 225, Fr.)
WR	87	Brandon Tate (6-1, 190, Jr.)
	1	Brooks Foster (6-3, 200, Jr.)
QB	13	T.J. Yates (6-3, 205, Fr.)
	11	Cam Sexton (6-1, 190, So.)
RB	26	Richie Rich (5-9, 190, So.)
	6	Anthony Elzy (5-10, 210, Fr.)
FB	4	Bobby Rome (5-11, 240, So.)
	45	Devon Ramsay* (6-2, 240, Fr.)
K	10	Connor Barth (6-1, 190, Sr.)
KR	87	Brandon Tate (6-1, 190, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	33	Hilee Taylor (6-3, 241, Sr.)
	98	Darius Massenburg (6-3, 260, Fr.)
T	74	Kyndraus Guy (6-2, 280, Sr.)
	97	Aleric Mullins (6-3, 285, So.)
T	90	Kentwan Balmer (6-5, 288, Sr.)
	93	Cam Thomas (6-4, 315, So.)
E	92	E.J. Wilson (6-2, 260, So.)
	95	Greg Elleby (6-4, 260, Fr.)
SLB	44	Chase Rice (6-3, 220, Jr.)
	54	Bruce Carter* (6-3, 210, Fr.)
MLB	51	Wesley Flagg (6-0, 215, So.)
	41	Mark Paschal (6-0, 225, Jr.)
WLB	48	Durell Mapp (6-2, 225, Sr.)
	21	Martel Thatch (6-2, 220, Sr.)
CB	38	Jermaine Strong (5-10, 185, So.)
	14	Kendric Williams (5-11, 190, Sr.)
FS	31	Trimane Goddard (5-11, 192, Jr.)
	27	Deunta Williams (6-2, 195, Fr.)
SS	20	Shaun Draughn (6-0, 195, Fr.)
	30	Bryan Dixon (5-11, 205, So.)
CB	16	Kendric Burney (5-9, 175, Fr.)
	2	Cooter Arnold (5-10, 190, So.)
P	19	Terrence Brown (6-3, 190, Jr.)
PR	87	Brandon Tate (6-1, 190, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB Johnny White. No returning running back had more than seven carries in '06. White, a redshirt freshman, isn't big but accelerates well and is elusive when he gets to the second level.

2 DT Marvin Austin. Many analysts rated Austin the nation's top defensive line prospect. He might instantly become UNC's best defensive player, though it's tough to dominate at this position as a freshman.



DUKE

BLUE DEVILS

SN projection **1-11, 6th**National rank **107**

There's no way to hide the fact Duke likely is the worst program in the BCS conferences. If the Blue Devils win two games after going 0-12 last season, it will demonstrate progress for coach Ted Roof, who is 5-34 entering his fourth full season.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

New coordinator Peter Vaas, who was Brady Quinn's quarterbacks coach at Notre Dame, will continue developing the spread-the-field, passing-oriented game Bill O'Brien used before leaving for the New England Patriots.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL The returning starter at quarterback, sophomore Thaddeus Lewis, had a solid spring. He makes the right reads and can be an accurate passer when



BOB LEVERONE / SN

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	15	Eron Riley (6-3, 200, Jr.)
	18	Jeremy Ringfield (6-5, 210, Fr.)
LT	74	Cameron Goldberg (6-6, 280, Jr.)
	77	Jarrod Holt (6-6, 310, So.)
LG	60	Zach Maurides (6-6, 290, Sr.)
	73	Marcus Lind (6-4, 310, Fr.)
C	68	Matt Rumsey (6-4, 285, Sr.)
	72	Garrett Mason (6-5, 300, Sr.)
RG	61	Rob Schirmann (6-5, 285, Jr.)
	67	Mitchell Lederman (6-8, 320, Fr.)
RT	70	Fred Roland (6-8, 310, Jr.)
	75	Robert Drum (6-6, 285, Fr.)
TE	80	Nick Stefanow (6-4, 235, Sr.)
	83	Norman Gee (6-5, 250, So.)
WR	81	Jomar Wright (6-1, 200, Sr.)
	5	Raphael Chestnut (6-2, 190, Jr.)
QB	9	Thaddeus Lewis (6-2, 190, So.)
		Zack Asack (6-4, 200, So.)
RB	20	Justin Boyle (6-1, 215, Sr.)
	21	Re'quan Boyette (5-10, 210, Jr.)
H-B	2	Tielor Robinson (5-11, 245, Sr.)
	22	Brandon King (6-2, 260, So.)
K	26	Joe Surgan (6-4, 210, Jr.)
KR	1	Jabari Marshall (5-11, 200, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	91	Ayanga Okpokowuruk (6-4, 255, So.)
	50	Ryan Radloff (6-4, 260, So.)
T	3	Vince Oghobaase (6-6, 310, So.)
	97	Clifford Respress (6-4, 275, Jr.)
T	97	Clifford Respress (6-4, 275, Jr.)
	91	Ayanga Okpokowuruk (6-4, 255, So.)
E	84	Patrick Bailey (6-4, 235, Sr.)
	54	Greg Akinbiyi (6-2, 250, Jr.)
SLB	45	Charles Robinson (6-2, 215, Jr.)
	6	Marcus Jones (6-3, 220, Jr.)
MLB	34	Michael Tauiiliili (5-11, 235, Jr.)
	33	Alfred Williams (6-2, 250, Jr.)
VLB	53	Vincent Rey (6-0, 255, So.)
	35	Tim Ball (6-1, 225, Jr.)
CB	22	Rodney Ezzard (5-11, 180, Sr.)
	1	Jabari Marshall (5-11, 200, Jr.)
FS	27	Chris Davis (6-0, 205, Sr.)
	23	Catron Gainey (6-2, 205, So.)
SS	28	Adrian Aye-Darko (6-2, 210, Jr.)
	24	Glenn Williams (5-10, 185, Jr.)
CB	7	Leon Wright (5-9, 165, So.)
	18	Chris Rwabukamba (6-0, 175, Fr.)
P	49	Kevin Jones (6-3, 185, Fr.)
PR	7	Leon Wright (5-9, 165, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Wallace Wade (grass, 33,941)
Site: Durham, N.C.
Coach: Ted Roof (5-34, 4 years, 10th at school)
Offensive coordinator: Peter Vaas (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Ted Roof (1st year)

Last league title won: 1989 (tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 1994.
2006 record: 0-12, 0-8/6th ACC Coastal

Returning leaders: Rushing—Re'quan Boyette (87 att., 388 yards, 2 TDs). Passing—Thaddeus Lewis (180-340-16, 2,134 yards, 11 TDs). Receiving—Jomar Wright (40 rec., 561 yards, 2 TDs); Eron Riley (32 rec., 643 yards, 3 TDs).

not facing an all-out assault—which he encounters frequently because the line can't handle the pass rush. Zack Asack, who missed last season while serving an academic suspension, will compete with Lewis for the job. Jomar Wright, Eron Riley and Raphael Chestnut give Duke three solid wide receivers to run the spread offense. Running backs Justin Boyle and Requan Boyette are serviceable, though not spectacular. The big problem is the line, which has shown some improvement but gave up an ACC-high 43 sacks last season. Center Matt Rumsey and left tackle Cameron Goldberg are the leaders of the unit, and there also are young players ready to make an impact.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Roof will assume control of the defense, which blitzed a lot last season because the defensive backs could hold their own. Now, with the secondary more vulnerable, the improved front will have to bring pressure without blitzing as often.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The unit will be strong up the middle. Tackle Vince Oghobaase was highly recruited and has the ability to establish a dominating presence as a sophomore. Michael Tauiiliili, a third-year starter at middle linebacker, is an excellent tackler, and Chris Davis, Adrian Aye-Darko and Glenn Williams give the Blue Devils three strong

players returning at safety. Aside from end Patrick Bailey, though, the perimeter is shaky. Opponents will be able to attack the corners.

SPECIAL TEAMS Jabari Marshall averaged 25.1 yards per kickoff return last season, but he's the only bright spot in the return game. Joe Surgan missed seven of his 10 field goal attempts last season, and redshirt freshman Kevin Jones probably will win the punter job.

COACHING STAFF As expected after a winless season, there have been departures and shuffling on the staff. Vaas, Danny Pearman (tight ends/special teams) and John Gutekunst (defensive backs) have joined the team. Roof is taking over for Scott Brown and Jerry Azzinaro, who were co-coordinators last season. Brown remains defensive line coach.

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	• Connecticut	
9-8	at Virginia	0-37
9-15	at Northwestern	
9-22	at Navy	13-38
9-29	at Miami	15-20
10-6	Wake Forest	13-14
10-13	Virginia Tech	0-36
10-27	■ at Florida State	24-51
11-3	Clemson	
11-10	Georgia Tech	21-49
11-17	at Notre Dame	
11-24	▲ at North Carolina	44-45

■ Toughest game • Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

ACC schedule strength: 2nd

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB Ronnie Drummer. His speed as a tailback and slot receiver makes him one of Duke's best big-play threats, but he often is injured, perhaps because of his lack of size (5-9, 185). Duke needs him healthy.

2 LB Marcus Jones. He played quarterback and receiver but has moved to strongside linebacker, where he provides an upgrade in athletic ability. His knowledge of defenses as a former quarterback could help his transition.

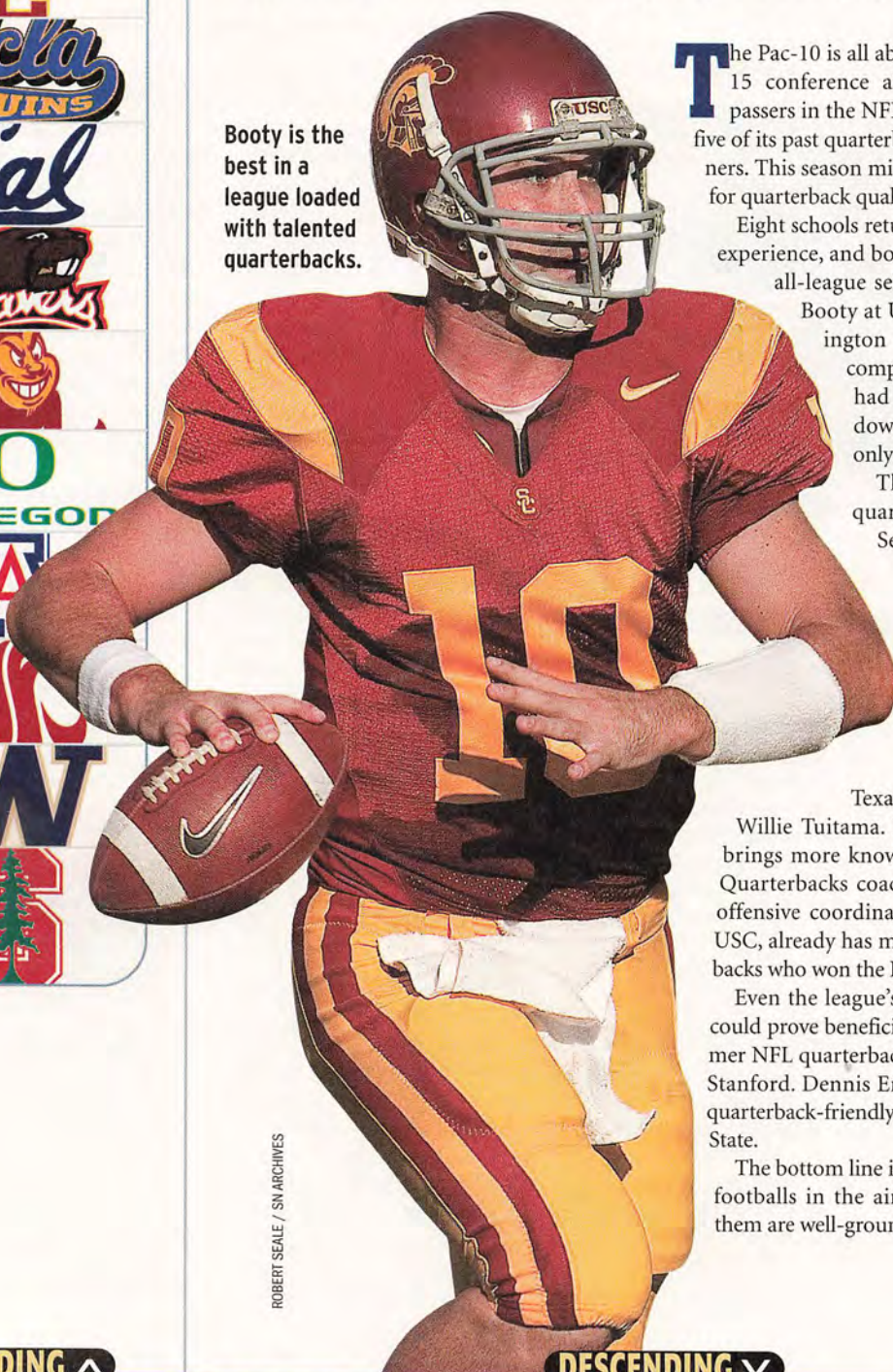
PAC-10

Projected finish

1	Stanford
2	UCLA Bruins
3	Cal
4	Beavers
5	Oregon
6	Arizona
7	Washington
8	Washington State
9	Utah
10	Arizona State

Quarterbacks will get passing grades—again

Booty is the best in a league loaded with talented quarterbacks.



ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

The Pac-10 is all about quarterbacks. There were 15 conference alumni getting paychecks as passers in the NFL last year, and the league lists five of its past quarterbacks as Heisman Trophy winners. This season might be about as good as it gets for quarterback quality.

Eight schools return quarterbacks with starting experience, and both the first- and second-team all-league selections return—John David Booty at USC and Alex Brink at Washington State. Cal's Nate Longshore completed 60 percent of his passes, had almost twice as many touchdowns as interceptions and was only an honorable mention pick.

The schools that feature new quarterbacks, Oregon State with Sean Canfield and Washington with Jake Locker, are concerned more about experience than talent.

Coaching changes could affect the quality of play. Arizona hired offensive coordinator Sonny Dykes to put in a

Texas Tech-style passing game for Willie Tuitama. New coordinator Chip Kelly brings more know-how to the Oregon spread. Quarterbacks coach Steve Sarkisian, who adds offensive coordinator to his job description at USC, already has mentored two Trojans quarterbacks who won the Heisman Trophy.

Even the league's two head coaching changes could prove beneficial for their quarterbacks. Former NFL quarterback Jim Harbaugh takes over at Stanford. Dennis Erickson, who has a history of quarterback-friendly offenses, takes over at Arizona State.

The bottom line is that the Pac-10 again will see footballs in the air because the guys throwing them are well-grounded.

ASCENDING ^

Arizona State. Turnarounds never take long for Dennis Erickson, as fans at previous coaching stops Washington State and Oregon State can attest. This team had more talent than is shown when it finished 7-6 last year, and Erickson already has started his infusion of junior college talent. Plus, the schedule is set up for success.

DESCENDING v

Oregon State. Winning 10 games and finishing 6-3 in the Pac-10 again will be a challenge with a new quarterback and a road schedule that includes Arizona State, California, USC and Oregon. Even the nonleague portion offers serious challenges with Utah in the opener followed by a trip to Cincinnati.



ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

Coming back from injuries

Victor Filipe, DE, Oregon. He resisted coming back at midseason when the Ducks were desperate for a pass rusher, and now he's recovered from a dislocated elbow.

Josh Pinkard, FS, USC. If he's all the way back from knee surgery, Pinkard is an all-league candidate at either cornerback or safety.

Ben Olson, QB, UCLA. Patrick Cowan filled in nicely after Olson's knee injury last year, but Olson adds another dimension to an offense that was eighth in the league.

Zach Krula, OT, Arizona State. The NCAA granted him a sixth year to complete his eligibility after he missed the past two seasons. He'll give the Sun Devils a giant blocker (6-7, 320) up front.

Time to get it done

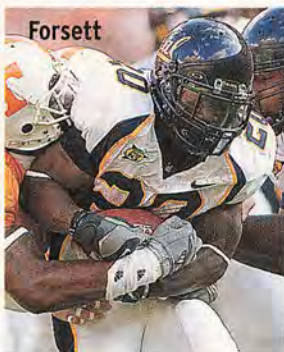
Patrick Turner, WR, USC. Key losses mandate that Turner will need to become the go-to receiver; the rest of the depth chart is untried at this level. In one of his two starts last season, Turner made 12 receptions.

T.C. Ostrander, QB, Stanford. The Cardinal won't get better unless Ostrander improves his completion percentage (.456) and throws more than one touchdown every 53 pass attempts.

Justin Forsett, RB, California. Jeff Tedford's offense needs a strong running game, and Forsett finally is the man.

The 5-8 senior has gained 1,674 yards as a three-year backup.

Mike Nixon, LB, Arizona State. Too much probably was expected of him in his 2006 freshman season, but now as a 23-year-old sophomore (he went from high school to professional baseball to college football) he needs to provide a spark for the rebuilt unit.



JAY DROWNS / SN

Newcomers to watch

J.R. Hasty, RB, Washington. The Huskies, with a redshirt freshman playing quarterback, need a strong running threat to attain balance. Hasty should have provided that last season, but he was derailed by academics.

Darian Hagan, CB, California. This highly regarded recruit is ready to pull off his redshirt and claim the job vacated by Daymeion Hughes. If Hagan does, he will have some pretty big shoes to fill.

Jamere Holland, WR, USC. He has been called the Trojans' fastest player. Now the talented redshirt freshman must show he can run with the big boys and ease the pain in a depleted receiving corps.

Everson Griffen, DE, USC. Even among USC's all-everything recruits, he stands out. Known primarily as a tailback in high school, he'll be using his 265-pound body to run down quarterbacks as a defensive end for the Trojans.

Honor roll

Best pregame atmosphere: Autzen Stadium, Oregon

Best home-field advantage: Reser Stadium, Oregon State

Best stadium: Stanford

Best fans: Cal

Best mascot: The Tree, Stanford

Strongest arm: Willie Tuitama, Arizona

Most dangerous scrambler: Dennis Dixon, Oregon

Fastest running back: Joe McKnight, USC

Most physical receiver: Patrick Turner, USC

Surest hands: DeSean Jackson, Cal

Most dominant O-lineman: Sam Baker, USC

Most disruptive end: Bruce Davis, UCLA

Best run-stuffing tackle: Sedrick Ellis, USC

Hardest-hitting linebacker: Rey Mauluga, USC

Best cover man: Antoine Cason, Arizona

Top NFL prospect: John David Booty, QB, USC

All-conference

FIRST TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	DeSean Jackson, California (6-0, 166, Jr.)
WR	Sammie Stroughter, Oregon State (6-0, 188, Sr.)
TE	Craig Stevens, California (6-5, 254, Sr.)
T	Sam Baker, USC (6-5, 305, Sr.)
T	Mike Gibson, California (6-5, 290, Sr.)
G	Jeremy Perry, Oregon State (6-2, 313, Jr.)
G	Shannon Tevaga, UCLA (6-3, 316, Sr.)
C	Alex Mack, California (6-5, 300, Jr.)
QB	John David Booty, USC (6-3, 210, Sr.)
RB	Yvenson Bernard, Oregon State (5-9, 204, Sr.)
RB	Chris Markey, UCLA (5-11, 204, Sr.)

Defense

E	Bruce Davis, UCLA (6-3, 237, Sr.)
E	Lawrence Jackson, USC (6-5, 265, Sr.)
T	Sedrick Ellis, USC (6-1, 295, Sr.)
T	Michael Marquardt, Arizona State (6-4, 295, Sr.)
LB	Rey Mauluga, USC (6-3, 250, Jr.)
LB	Keith Rivers, USC (6-3, 230, Sr.)
LB	Derrick Doggett, Oregon State (6-3, 210, Sr.)
CB	Antoine Cason, Arizona (6-1, 182, Sr.)
CB	Terrell Thomas, USC (6-1, 200, Sr.)
S	Taylor Mays, USC (6-4, 225, So.)
S	Chris Horton, UCLA (6-1, 210, Sr.)

Specialists

K	Alexis Serna, Oregon State (5-8, 162, Sr.)
P	Andrew Larson, California (6-2, 190, Sr.)
KR	DeSean Jackson, California (6-0, 166, Jr.)
SN	All-American

Players of the year

Offense: John David Booty, QB, USC

Defense: Rey Mauluga, LB, USC

SECOND TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Patrick Turner, USC (6-5, 230, Jr.)
WR	Michael Bumpus, Washington State (6-0, 195, Sr.)
TE	Fred Davis, USC (6-4, 260, Sr.)
T	Brandon Rodd, Arizona State (6-4, 300, Sr.)
T	Eben Britton, Arizona (6-6, 280, So.)
G	Roy Schuening, Oregon State (6-4, 318, Sr.)
G	Chilo Rachal, USC (6-5, 300, Jr.)
C	Kyle DeVan, Oregon State (6-2, 294, Sr.)
QB	Nate Longshore, California (6-5, 233, Jr.)
RB	Ryan Torain, Arizona State (6-1, 213, Sr.)
RB	Jonathan Stewart, Oregon (5-11, 230, Jr.)

Defense

E	Louis Holmes, Arizona (6-6, 270, Sr.)
E	Greyson Gunheim, Washington (6-5, 265, Sr.)
T	Lionel Dotson, Arizona (6-4, 278, Sr.)
T	Ekem Udofia, Stanford (6-2, 310, So.)
LB	Brian Cushing, USC (6-4, 245, Jr.)
LB	Spencer Larsen, Arizona (6-1, 236, Sr.)
LB	Zack Follett, California (6-2, 237, Jr.)
CB	Trey Brown, UCLA (5-9, 185, Sr.)
CB	Jaius Byrd, Oregon (5-11, 208, So.)
S	Kevin Ellison, USC (6-1, 220, Jr.)
S	Josh Barrett, Arizona State (6-3, 231, Sr.)

Specialists

K	Tom Schneider, California (6-1, 191, Sr.)
P	Aaron Perez, UCLA (6-4, 219, Jr.)
KR	Sammie Stroughter, Oregon State (6-0, 188, Sr.)

Newcomers of the year

Offense: J.R. Hasty, RB, Washington

Defense: Everson Griffen, E, USC



JAY DROWNS / SN

Gotta-see games

> Tennessee at California, Sept. 1

After a 365-day wait, the Bears get their chance to avenge that thumping they took in last year's opener at Knoxville.

> Oregon at Michigan, Sept. 8

The Wolverines also seek revenge for a costly 2003 loss at Autzen Stadium. In their three games at the Big House, the Ducks have not scored a point.

> Oregon State at Arizona State, Sept. 22

Dennis Erickson's first Pac-10 game as Sun Devils coach is against a team he coached from 1999-2002. Not that he hasn't coached against former teams before.

> USC at Notre Dame, Oct. 20

With memories of the high grass in South Bend two years ago, the Trojans might bring a lawn mower for this battle.

> California at Arizona State, Oct. 27

It's possible the Sun Devils could be unbeaten and coming off a bye when they host the Bears. It will be the second straight week that Cal's opponent comes off a bye.

> Oregon State at USC, Nov. 3

The last time the Beavers beat the Trojans in Los Angeles was 1960. And USC will be motivated to avenge the loss that ended their hopes for an unbeaten season last year.

> USC at California, Nov. 10

The league's two winningest teams over the last five seasons should settle this year's title. Could it be big enough that the loser will be headed to the Rose Bowl?

> UCLA at USC, Dec. 1

It's possible the Pac-10 title still could be at stake. No matter, this rivalry generates great interest and an occasional surprise, such as the Bruins' victory last season.

>Dream schedule **Arizona State.** The Sun Devils have eight home games, including their opening four. And the first road game takes them to Stanford, not an imposing challenge for the conference opener. Top contenders California and USC also come to Tempe, as does top rival Arizona. This schedule almost guarantees success for a first-year head coach.

>Nightmare schedule **Washington.** The Huskies open at Syracuse in August and close at Hawaii in December. There are nonconference home games against Boise State and Ohio State, teams that

posted a combined 25-1 record last season. The Pac-10 schedule opens with that 1-2 punch from Los Angeles—UCLA at the Rose Bowl and USC in Seattle.

>Bowl bound USC is headed for a BCS bowl, and a national title game appearance would leave the Rose Bowl open for California. UCLA should get a bid despite a difficult nonleague schedule, and Arizona State should take advantage of an easier slate. Oregon State and Oregon should fill out the six-team allotment, though two BCS qualifiers could open a berth for Arizona or Washington State.

Guys who change game plans

WR/PR DeSean Jackson, California. Teams might punt away from the ultra-dangerous Jackson, who returned four kicks for touchdowns last season, but keeping him from catching passes won't be so easy. Once he has the football, good luck getting him stopped.

WR/PR Sammie Stroughter, Oregon State. He, too, is a dangerous receiver who also returned three punts for touchdowns last year. And the Beavers find creative ways to get him the ball.

TE Fred Davis, USC. He's an oversized wide receiver who requires accountability from overmatched defenders. There are sets in which matchups dictate that he become the primary receiver.

KR/TB Jonathan Stewart, Oregon. Teams that stop his running prosper. But woe to the defense that lets him get up a head of steam. He forces kickers to direct the ball away from him.

PR/WR Michael Bumpus, Washington State. Because he usually works out of the slot, he alters defensive game plans and keeps opponents from doubling the wideout on his side. He might be even more dangerous as a punt returner because he's in the open field.

Guys who make game plans

ON THE HOT SEAT: Mike Stoops, Arizona. In this league, it might be more of a warm seat. But by any standards, it's time for Stoops to win after going 12-22 in his first three seasons and failing to end a bowl drought that stretches back to 1998. Bill Doba also needs to win at Washington State, where he was 10-3 in his first season but 15-19 in the three since.

BEST COACH: Pete Carroll, USC. Yes, Carroll has talent advantages at USC, but he makes the most of them. He brings in top talent, plays his best recruits right away to keep them happy and gets his teams prepared to play in big games—the ability that sets him apart from his peers. His teams always seem to perform well in the spotlight.

BEST OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Tedford, California. Head coach Tedford is calling his own plays, and isn't that the job description of an offensive coordinator? Jim Michalczyk has the title, but his primary duty is coaching the offensive line, which he has done well throughout Tedford's tenure. The Bears refer to their offense as a team effort, but make no mistake: Tedford is the sideline quarterback.

BEST DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Holt, USC. Holt joined Pete Carroll's staff last season after two years as Idaho's head coach.

It's no coincidence that his first Trojans defense dominated Pac-10 statistics. Seven of USC's regular-season opponents scored two or fewer touchdowns, and then his unit stymied Michigan in the Rose Bowl.

RISEING STAR: Jay Norvell, UCLA offensive coordinator. He has caught the eye of many schools because of a nice blend of NFL and college coordinator experience. This figures to be his last stop before taking command of a program.

BEST STAFF: California. Tough call, but a slight edge goes to Cal over USC. The Bears do almost as much with less talent than the Trojans, so somebody must be doing some quality teaching.



Carroll

ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

> Nonconference lineup

Arizona: BYU, Northern Arizona, New Mexico

Arizona State: San Jose State, Colorado, San Diego State

Cal: Tennessee, Colorado State, Louisiana Tech

Oregon: Houston, Michigan, Fresno State

Oregon State: Utah, Cincinnati, Idaho State

Stanford: San Jose State, TCU, Notre Dame

UCLA: BYU, Utah, Notre Dame

USC: Idaho, Nebraska, Notre Dame

Washington: Syracuse, Boise State, Ohio State, Hawaii

Washington State: Wisconsin, San Diego State, Idaho

UNIT rankings

	Backfield	Receivers	Offensive line	Overall	Defensive line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
Arizona	8	8	7	8	5	5	3	4	6	9
Arizona State	3	6	5	5	2	6	7	6	4	5
California	2	1	3	2	6	3	6	5	1	1
Oregon	4	7	6	6	7	9	4	7	7	3
Oregon State	6	4	2	3	3	2	5	2	2	4
Stanford	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Washington	9	9	8	9	8	7	8	8	8	8
Washington State	7	3	9	7	9	8	9	9	9	7
UCLA	5	5	4	4	4	4	2	3	5	6
USC	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

Returning leaders

RUSHING Player, school, class										
	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.		
1. Yvenson Bernard, Oregon State, Sr.	13	296	1,307	4.4	28	12	100.5	15		
2. Ryan Torain, Arizona State, Sr.	13	223	1,229	5.5	64	7	94.5	21		
3. Chris Markey, UCLA, Sr.	13	227	1,107	4.9	70	2	85.2	29		
4. Jonathan Stewart, Oregon, Jr.	13	183	981	5.4	63	10	75.5	42		
5. Chauncey Washington, USC, Sr.	13	157	744	4.7	43	9	57.2	83		
PASSING Player, school, class										
	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1. John David Booty, USC, Sr.	13	269	436	61.7	9	3,347	12.4	29	144.0	11
2. Nate Longshore, California, Jr.	13	227	377	60.2	13	3,021	13.3	24	141.6	17
3. Alex Brink, Washington State, Sr.	12	241	396	60.9	10	2,899	12.0	19	133.1	21
4. Rudy Carpenter, Arizona State, Jr.	13	184	332	55.4	14	2,523	13.7	23	133.7	39
5. Dennis Dixon, Oregon, Sr.	12	197	322	61.2	14	2,143	10.9	12	120.7	59
RECEIVING Player, school, class										
	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.	
1. Sammie Stroughter, Oregon State, Sr.	14	74	1,293	80	5	5.3	17.5	92.4	116	
2. Jaison Williams, Oregon, Jr.	12	68	984	67	6	5.7	14.5	82.0	127	
3. Michael Bumpus, Washington State, Sr.	12	60	558	37	1	5.0	9.3	46.5	142	
4. DeSean Jackson, California, Jr.	13	59	1,060	62	9	4.5	18.0	81.5	147	
5. Mike Thomas, Arizona, Jr.	12	50	597	39	2	4.2	11.9	49.8	190	



UCLA defensive backs (left to right): Rodney Van, Chris Horton, Dennis Keyes and Trey Brown.

Recruiting buzz

Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact	Diamond in the rough
1. USC	DE Everson Griffen, 6-4/266	RB Joe McKnight, 6-1/200	DE Trey Henderson, 6-3/264
2. Oregon	DT Myles Wade, 6-5/275	WR Drew Davis, 6-0/210	LB Brandon Hanna, 6-3/225
3. California	RB Jahvid Best, 5-10/183	DB Chris Conte, 6-3/180	DE Cameron Jordan, 6-3/250
4. Washington	WR Anthony Boyles, 6-3/185	RB Nate Williams, 6-0/190	RB Willie Griffin, 5-8/192
5. UCLA	DT Brian Price, 6-2/285	RB Raymond Carter, 5-11/187	LB Steve Sloan, 6-2/219
6. Arizona	LB Apaiaa Tuihalamaka, 6-3/205	LB Vuna Tuihalamaka, 6-1/220	DB Trevin Wade, 5-10/163
7. Arizona State	RB Omar Bolden, 5-11/185	OL Garth Gerhart, 6-1/299	QB Chasen Stangel, 6-0/184
8. Oregon State	ATH Reggie Dunn, 5-8/158	DB David Ross, 6-0/174	DB Anthony Watkins, 6-1/183
9. Stanford	QB Kellen Klusgaard, 6-3/215	WR Corey Gatewood, 5-11/175	WR Sean Wisner, 6-2/190
10. Washington State	DB Terry Mixon, 6-1/200	OL Vaughn Lesuma, 6-5/340	OL Andrew Roxas, 6-2/298

Rankings by Rivals.com

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
USC	11-2*	12-1*	13-0*	12-1*	11-1*	59-5
California	10-3*	8-4	10-2	8-6	7-5	43-20
Oregon State	10-4	5-6	7-5	8-5	8-5	38-25
Oregon	7-6	10-2	5-6	8-5	7-6	37-25
UCLA	7-6	10-2	6-6	6-7	8-5	37-26
Arizona State	7-6	7-5	9-3	5-7	8-6	36-27
Washington State	6-6	4-7	5-6	10-3	10-3*	35-24
Washington	5-7	2-9	1-10	6-6	7-6	21-38
Arizona	6-6	3-8	3-8	2-10	4-8	18-40
Stanford	1-11	5-6	4-7	4-7	2-9	16-40

*Conference champ ^National champ

TROJANS

So star receivers Dwayne Jarrett and Steve Smith are gone. Does anyone really think that's a problem for USC? The Trojans are as deep and powerful as ever with 18 returning starters back. Anything less than serious national title contention would be a surprise.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Quarterbacks coach Steve Sarkisian also will coordinate Pete Carroll's high-powered, balanced system. The Trojans might go to the shotgun formation, a favorite of quarterback John David Booty's, in some situations.

SKILL POSITIONS Here's a surprise: USC has another Heisman candidate at quarterback. Booty, with his

near-flawless combination of arm strength, mobility and poise, will force strong-armed backup Mark Sanchez to sit again. USC has 10—yes, 10—highly regarded tailbacks who hope to improve that 128-yard team rushing average from last season. C.J. Gable appears to have the

Quick hits

Stadium: Los Angeles Coliseum (grass, 92,000)
Site: Los Angeles

Coach: Pete Carroll (65-12, 6 years)

Offensive coordinator:

Steve Sarkisian (1st year, 6th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Nick Holt (2nd year, 5th at school)

Last league title won: 2006 (tie).

Last year not in a bowl: 2000.

2006 record: 11-2, 7-2/11st Pac-10

Rose Bowl: Beat Michigan, 32-18

inside track, but veteran Chauncey Washington and hopefuls Allen Bradford and Stafon Johnson will be lurking. Incoming talent is scary, too. There's a Reggie Bush clone in Joe McKnight; a LenDale White-type in Broderick Green, and an all-around weapon in Marc Tyler. Fullback Stanley Havili could be pushed by Bradford, Michael Coleman and freshman Jordan Campbell.

Patrick Turner has the stuff to become a big-play receiver, and David Ausberry was impressive in the spring. Redshirt freshman Jamere Holland offers breakaway speed and, as always, there's superb incoming talent in Brandon Carswell and Ronald Johnson. Fred Davis returns at tight end.



MATTHEW KUTZ / SN ARCHIVES

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 FB Stanley Havili. The Trojans are overloaded at tailback, but the backfield won't operate on all cylinders without the speed and pass-catching ability of Havili, who sat out most of last season with a broken leg.

2 K David Buehler. The Mario Danelo tragedy cast a pall over the program and put the Trojans in a bind. If Buehler can't harness his strong leg, USC will have to go the walk-on route to find a critical kick-scoring weapon.

A Pac-10 coach says ...

I like QB **John David Booty**. I think the offense was conservative last year because they wanted to protect him. They'll open things up this year now that he has experience. ... They lost some good receivers, but I suspect they have a couple more that are ready to step up. ... How many running backs did they have last year? Eight? It seemed like it. I think **C.J. Gable** was the best. **Emmanuel Moody** was right behind him. ... The defense should be great, especially the linebackers. All three of their starters could be first-round draft picks.

OFFENSIVE LINE Tackle Sam Baker is the foundation of a line that returns three starters. The Trojans are considering several scenarios, including one in which versatile Drew Radovich moves from guard to tackle to make room for tenacious Jeff Byers, who was injured most of the past two seasons. Right guard Chilo Rachal is sure to reclaim his starting job, while coaches look for ways to get mobile Alatini Malu into the rotation. Matt Spanos might win the center job if he is eligible, but sophomore Nick Howell and freshman Kris O'Dowd are other options.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Trojans will run a truer 4-3 with Brian Cushing moving from end back to his more natural linebacker spot. A veteran look inspires hope that the defense can improve last year's uncharacteristically low turnover ratio.

FRONT SEVEN The Trojans have the best linebacker trio in the nation with Rey Mauluga, Keith Rivers and Cushing, who led USC in tackles for loss last season. Rivers is fast on the weak side, and Mauluga brings ferocity to the middle. The line returns almost intact with Kyle Moore, Alex Morrow and super recruit Everson Griffen fighting it out for Cushing's vacated end position. Explosive end Lawrence Jackson and dominant tackles Sedrick Ellis and Fili Moala are locked in at the other three spots.

SECONDARY Here's another nice problem: The Trojans

must make room at safety for Josh Pinkard, a 2005 starter who missed most of last season with a knee injury. The problem is that two outstanding safeties, Kevin Ellison and Taylor Mays, also return. Cornerback is similarly stacked. Returning starters Terrell Thomas and Cary Harris are solid but still must ward off such challengers as Kevin Thomas and Moziq McCurtis, who played nickel back last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS With the death of kicker Mario Danelo, this unit might be USC's weakest. The unenviable task of following Danelo, who connected on 26-of-28 field goal attempts in his two seasons, goes to David Buehler, who has kicked one career field goal. Buehler also will handle kickoffs. Walk-on punter Greg Woidneck returns after an unspectacular 2006 performance. Desmond Reed is a sure-handed and shifty punt returner, and Gable is tough to bring down returning kickoffs. Other return options are Harris and Vincent Joseph.

COACHING STAFF Even with the loss of offensive coordinator Lane Kiffin, who left to become coach of the Oakland Raiders, change is minimal. Sarkisian already was the assistant head coach and steps naturally into the coordinator job, and Kiffin's recruiting coordinator tasks have been taken over by tight ends coach Brennan Carroll. Kiffin's other job as receivers coach will be handled by NFL-tested John Morton.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Chauncey Washington	157	744	4.7	9	
Emmanuel Moody	79	459	5.8	2	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
John David Booty	269-436-9	3,347		29	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Fred Davis	38	352	9.3	3	
Patrick Turner	29	272	9.4	2	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
C.J. Gable	16	432	27.0	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
David Buehler	—	—	1	1	3
Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Keith Rivers	47	38	85	7.5/22	
Rey Mauluga	45	33	78	5/17	
Kevin Ellison	36	28	64	6/21	

Sacks: Brian Cushing, Sedrick Ellis (4.5)

Interceptions: Taylor Mays (3)



Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	1	Patrick Turner (6-5, 230, Jr.)
	9	David Ausberry (6-5, 215, Fr.)
LT	79	Sam Baker (6-5, 305, Sr.)
	68	Butch Lewis (6-7, 300, Fr.)
LG	53	Jeff Byers (6-3, 285, Jr.)
	70	Alatini Malu (6-4, 330, Sr.)
C	69	Matt Spanos (6-5, 305, Sr.)
	76	Nick Howell (6-5, 265, So.)
RG	66	Chilo Rachal (6-5, 300, Jr.)
	77	Thomas Herring (6-6, 330, So.)
RT	60	Drew Radovich (6-5, 305, Sr.)
	71	Charles Brown (6-6, 285, So.)
TE	83	Fred Davis (6-4, 260, Sr.)
	88	Jimmy Miller (6-5, 260, Jr.)
WR	7	Vidal Hazelton (6-3, 200, So.)
	17	Travon Patterson (5-11, 180, So.)
QB	10	John David Booty (6-3, 210, Sr.)
	6	Mark Sanchez (6-3, 225, So.)
RB	23	Chauncey Washington (6-1, 220, Sr.)
	2	C.J. Gable (6-1, 190, So.)
FB	31	Stanley Havili (6-1, 220, Fr.)
	85	Cooper Stephenson (6-3, 220, Fr.)
K	18	David Buehler (6-2, 225, Jr.)
KR	2	C.J. Gable (6-1, 190, So.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Idaho	28-10	5-0
9-15	▲ at Nebraska	28-10	2-0-1
9-22	Washington State	28-22	4-1
9-29	at Washington	26-20	5-0
10-6	Stanford	42-0	5-0
10-13	Arizona	20-3	5-0
10-20	at Notre Dame	44-24	5-0
10-27	at Oregon	35-10	3-2
11-3	Oregon State	31-33	4-1
11-10	■ at California	23-9	4-1
11-22	at Arizona State*	28-21	5-0
12-1	● UCLA	9-13	4-1

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

Pac-10 schedule strength: 1st

>The Series Notre Dame (31-42-5):

USC has owned the Irish the last 11 years (8-3). Expect that mastery to continue, given the fact Notre Dame's offense looks shaky and USC's defense looks awesome.

>The Showdown vs. UCLA: The Trojans haven't forgotten what happened last year. Will the USC offense have an answer for the UCLA defense this time around? All eyes will be on a Trojans running game that was too uneven last season.

>The Smack Bring 'em on. There are several potential stumbling blocks on the road, including the Trojans' first visit to Nebraska since 1969. USC's national title hopes will sink or swim based on the last six games. The Trojans won't be intimidated.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	96	Lawrence Jackson (6-5, 265, Sr.)
	97	Alex Morrow (6-6, 270, Sr.)
NT	49	Sedrick Ellis (6-1, 295, Sr.)
	99	Averell Spicer (6-2, 295, So.)
T	75	Fili Moala (6-4, 295, Jr.)
	91	Chris Barrett (6-5, 265, Sr.)
E	84	Kyle Moore (6-6, 260, Jr.)
	91	Chris Barrett (6-5, 265, Sr.)
SLB	10	Brian Cushing (6-4, 245, Jr.)
	47	Clay Matthews (6-4, 230, Jr.)
MLB	58	Rey Mauluga (6-3, 250, Jr.)
	41	Thomas Williams (6-3, 240, Sr.)
WLB	55	Keith Rivers (6-3, 230, Sr.)
	43	Kaluka Maiava (6-0, 225, Jr.)
CB	7	Cary Harris (6-0, 180, Jr.)
	15	Kevin Thomas (6-1, 180, Jr.)
FS	2	Taylor Mays (6-4, 225, So.)
	36	Josh Pinkard (6-1, 215, Jr.)
SS	4	Kevin Ellison (6-1, 220, Jr.)
	9	Moziq McCurtis (6-1, 225, Jr.)
CB	28	Terrell Thomas (6-1, 200, Sr.)
	24	Shareece Wright (6-0, 185, So.)
P	44	Greg Woidneck (6-0, 195, Jr.)
PR	22	Desmond Reed (5-9, 180, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

BRUINS

The Bruins left a mixed message on the field late last season when they beat USC and then lost to Florida State in the Emerald Bowl. This year, 20 starters return, and new offensive coordinator Jay Norvell hopes to push the momentum forward.

Quick hits

Stadium: Rose Bowl (grass, 91,500).
Site: Pasadena, Calif.

Coach: Karl Dorrell (29-21, 4 years, 5 at school)

Offensive coordinator: Jay Norvell (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: DeWayne Walker (2nd year)

Last league title won: 1998.

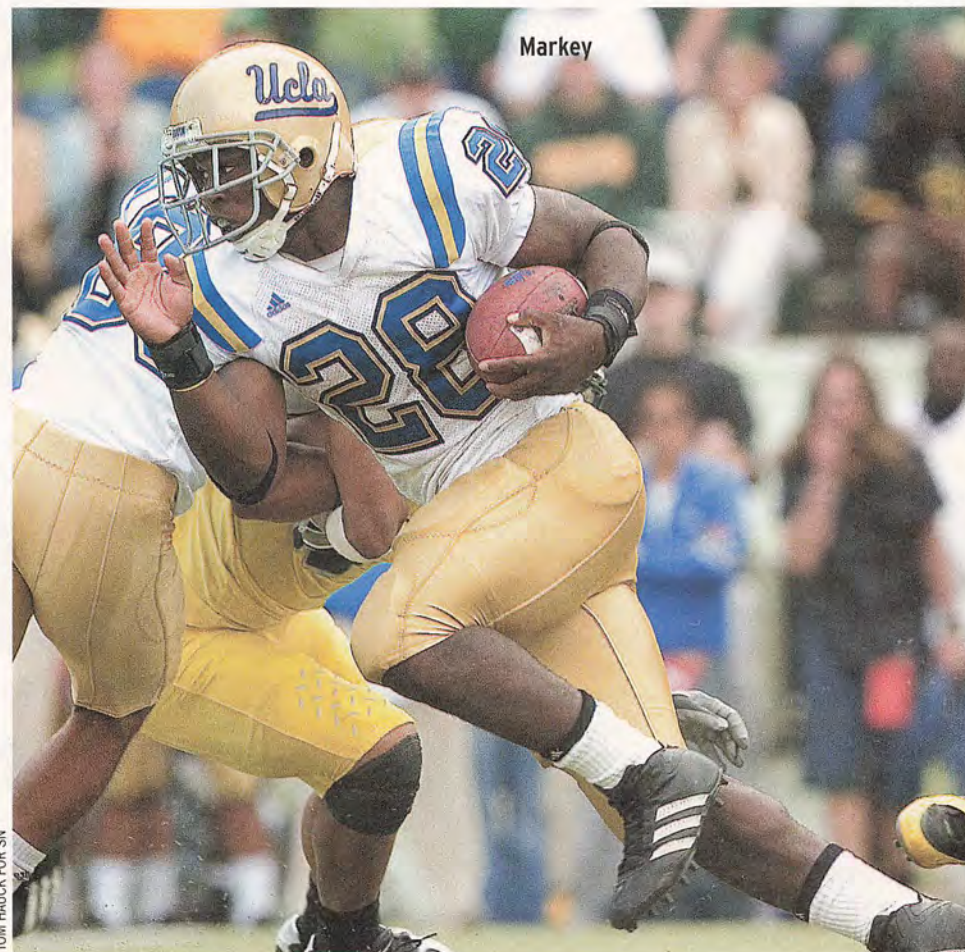
Last year not in a bowl: 2001.

2006 record: 7-6, 5-4/4th Pac-10

Emerald Bowl: Lost to Florida State, 44-27

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Norvell, who worked last season at Nebraska, is the fourth offensive coordinator to ride the Bruins' coaching carousel in the last five seasons. Under him, there will be more shotgun, more complex terminology and a faster tempo with multiple options.

SKILL POSITIONS Almost everybody returns, including two starting quarterbacks. Ben Olson won the job last spring but gave way to Patrick Cowan after suffering a midseason knee injury. The strong-armed Olson was better statistically



Markey

TOM HAUCK FOR SN

than the more mobile Cowan. Olson also was slightly better in the spring and won the job—for now.

There's plenty of veteran talent at receiver, but only Brandon Breazell has break-away speed. Marcus Everett started eight games last season and showed consistency and good hands. The unit will get a

boost if Joe Cowan, a big target, can stay healthy after missing last season with a knee injury and the spring with hamstring issues. Logan Paulsen is big target at tight end.

Tailback Chris Markey is dependable, if not explosive. He ran for 1,107 yards in 2006. Behind Markey is Derrick Williams, a capable inside run-

ner, and Kahlil Bell, a good run/pass option. Big, physical Chase Moline is a good short-yardage specialist who can be used in one-back formations.

OFFENSIVE LINE Chris Joseph, who started all 13 games at guard last season, is expected to move to center to fill the one line vacancy. Joseph's move allows Noah Sutherland

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 C Chris Joseph. No question the academic All-American is smart enough to make line calls, but he also must be athletic enough to handle the move from guard to center. If he can, UCLA can put its best offensive line on the field.

2 K Kai Forbath. Going from the nearly automatic Justin Medlock to a completely untested redshirt freshman is scary. But at least the Bruins know Forbath has a strong leg, which he displayed in practices last season.

A Pac-10 coach says ...

I think this is a make-or-break year for **Karl Dorrell**. They have some pressure on them because there are expectations that they haven't had there under him. ... The offense still will struggle, but the defense should be good. ... They had the most improved defense in the league. Coordinator **DeWayne Walker** did a great job. He had them playing more aggressive with man and zone blitzes. ... They don't have any receivers who scare you. ... I thought QB **Patrick Cowan** came in and sparked them. He did a better job than **Ben Olson**.

to move from tackle to guard and big, aggressive Micah Kia to move into the lineup at tackle. Kia's physical skills impressed coaches last season when the freshman played mostly on special teams. Now he projects as a three-year starter. The right side of the line will be manned by guard Shannon Tevaga and tackle Brian Abraham.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Bruins will remain aggressive out of their 4-3, asking corners to handle man-to-man coverage so more pressure can be generated on the quarterback from different positions. **FRONT SEVEN** The pass-rushing ability of end Bruce Davis highlights a veteran defense that loses only one starter. The other end spot is a question mark, with Nikola Dragovic the top candidate to replace All-American playmaker Justin Hickman. Brigham Harwell and Kevin Brown bring consistency to the tackle positions, and Kenneth Lombard has the versatility to play end or tackle.

Middle linebacker Christian Taylor leads a unit that returns all three starters and plenty of depth. Hard-hitting Reggie Carter can be dynamic at times on the weak side, and rugged Kyle Bosworth figures to challenge returning starter Aaron Whittington on the strong side. Bosworth, who doubles as a versatile special teams star, also could see time in the middle.

SECONDARY Talented cover corner Trey Brown anchors a secondary that also includes corner Rodney Van, hard-hit-

ting strong safety Chris Horton and free safety Dennis Keyes. Van will be pushed at right corner by aggressive Al Verner, who returned two interceptions for touchdowns last season and is a proven choice in nickel back sets.

SPECIAL TEAMS UCLA often wins its field-position battles, thanks to punter Aaron Perez, who is adept at kicking for length or pinning opponents near the goal line. But field goal kicking could be an adventure with the loss of All-American Justin Medlock. Kai Forbath has a better leg than Jimmy Rotstein, who will be waiting in the wings if Forbath stumbles. Sure-handed Ryan Graves is the Bruins' most reliable punt returner, though Terrence Austin showed flashes last season. There are plenty of kick re-turn options with Williams, Bell, Verner and McGee.

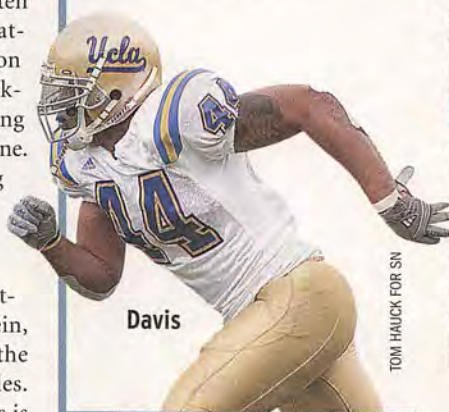
COACHING STAFF Continuity has been an annual concern for Karl Dorrell, who replaced three assistants in the offseason. Only secondary coach Gary DeLoach remains from Dorrell's original UCLA staff in 2003. Norvell replaces Jim Svoboda as offensive coordinator, Bob Connelly replaces Jim Colletto as offensive line coach and Eric Scott takes over for D.J. McCarthy as receivers coach. UCLA gave Dorrell another year on the new deal he signed a year ago, guaranteeing him through 2011. But that doesn't mean his seat won't warm up if the Bruins sputter.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Chris Markey	227	1,107	4.9	2	
Kahlil Bell	60	239	4.0	2	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Patrick Cowan	145-276-9	1,782	11		
Ben Olson	79-124-5	822	5		
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Chris Markey	35	261	7.5	0	
Marcus Everett	31	450	14.5	5	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Derrick Williams	13	340	26.2	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
None					
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Chris Horton	64	31	95	5/7	
Christian Taylor	45	38	83	13.5/52	
Dennis Keyes	60	19	79	5/15	
Sacks: Bruce Davis (12.5)					
Interceptions: Trey Brown (4)					

Sacks: Bruce Davis (12.5)

Interceptions: Trey Brown (4)



Davis

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	9	Marcus Everett (6-1, 196, Sr.)
	10	Gavin Ketchum (6-4, 201, Jr.)
LT	73	Micah Kia (6-5, 304, So.)
	78	Aleksey Lanis (6-6, 316, So.)
LG	71	Shannon Tevaga (6-3, 316, Sr.)
	67	P.J. Irvin (6-5, 305, Sr.)
C	60	Chris Joseph (6-5, 282, Sr.)
	58	Micah Reed (6-4, 306, Jr.)
RG	74	Noah Sutherland (6-5, 299, Sr.)
	75	Nick Ekbatani (6-4, 285, Jr.)
RT	68	Brian Abraham (6-6, 307, Sr.)
	72	Sean Sheller (6-4, 282, Fr.)
TE	86	Logan Paulsen (6-5, 247, Jr.)
	48	William Snead (6-5, 255, Sr.)
WR	1	Brandon Breazell (6-0, 156, Sr.)
	26	Joe Cowan (6-4, 220, Sr.)
QB	7	Ben Olson (6-5, 227, Jr.)
	12	Patrick Cowan (6-5, 218, Jr.)
RB	28	Chris Markey (5-11, 204, Sr.)
	36	Kahlil Bell (6-0, 205, Jr.)
FB	31	Trevor Theriot (6-0, 226, So.)
	32	Michael Pitre (6-0, 244, Sr.)
K	15	Kai Forbath (6-0, 193, Fr.)
KR	24	Ryen Carew (5-9, 170, So.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	at Stanford	31-0	4-1
9-8	BYU		5-0
9-15	at Utah	31-10	5-0
9-22	Washington	19-29	4-1
9-29	▲ at Oregon State	25-7	4-1
10-6	Notre Dame	17-20	0-3
10-20	● California	24-38	2-3
10-27	at Washington State	15-37	1-4
11-3	at Arizona	27-7	4-1
11-10	Arizona State	24-12	4-1
11-24	Oregon	20-30	1-4
12-1	■ at USC	13-9	1-4

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to be upset

Pac-10 schedule strength: 4th

>The Series USC (28-41-7): Not only did last season's win end a seven-game losing skid to USC, it killed the Trojans' national title dreams. This year's showdown again could have national ramifications. Is the Bruins' offense up to the task?

>The Showdown vs. Cal: This is a matchup between what figures to be two future NFL head coaches. Win here, and the Bruins will reclaim their throne as one of the top two teams in the Pac-10.

>The Smack Think big: Five of nine league games are on the road, but only two are scary: Oregon State and USC. UCLA is aching to pay back Notre Dame. A win in that game would set up a November in which the Bruins could determine their bowl quality.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	96	Nikola Dragovic (6-3, 256, Sr.)
	96	Tom Blake (6-4, 275, Jr.)
T	53	Brigham Harwell (6-2, 286, Sr.)
	52	Jess Ward (6-3, 294, So.)
T	75	Kevin Brown (6-2, 293, Sr.)
	50	Chase Moline (6-2, 280, Jr.)
E	44	Bruce Davis (6-3, 237, Sr.)
	77	Kenneth Lombard (6-1, 261, Jr.)
SLB	42	Aaron Whittington (6-2, 215, Sr.)
	54	Kyle Bosworth (6-1, 225, Jr.)
MLB	33	Christian Taylor (6-0, 222, Sr.)
	12	John Hale (6-4, 226, Jr.)
WLB	51	Reggie Carter (6-1, 218, So.)
	8	Shawn Oatis (6-0, 220, So.)
CB	23	Trey Brown (5-9, 185, Sr.)
	22	Michael Norris (5-10, 176, Jr.)
FS	11	Dennis Keyes (6-2, 194, Sr.)
	27	Aaron Ware (6-0, 192, So.)
SS	14	Chris Horton (6-1, 210, Sr.)
	25	Bret Lockett (6-2, 206, Jr.)
CB	3	Rodney Van (5-11, 170, Sr.)
	1	Alterraun Verner (5-10, 170, So.)
P	17	Aaron Perez (6-4, 219, Jr.)
PR	4	Terrence Austin (5-11, 162, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

GOLDEN BEARS

Four straight bowl appearances under Jeff Tedford have changed the football equation at Cal: Fans no longer wonder if the Golden Bears will qualify for a bowl; now they wonder which one. With a solid core of returning starters and a schedule that brings most of their toughest opponents to Memorial Stadium, the Bears should easily stretch the bowl streak to five. A BCS bowl isn't out of the question.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Jim Michalczyk takes over as coordinator, but make no mistake: This is Tedford's offense. The Bears deploy an impressive repertoire of plays out of their multiple pro set and rotate players often to keep execution sharp.

SKILL POSITIONS There's not much intrigue about the starters, most of whom return. Nate Longshore is a lock at quarterback after finishing second in the conference in passing efficiency and throwing for 3,021 yards. His decision-making has improved and Tedford believes his mobility will, too; Longshore trimmed 10-15 pounds off his Holiday Bowl weight of 240. Behind Longshore will be Kyle Reed, a strong and quick sophomore, or freshman Kevin Riley, who showed good presence and a quick learning curve as a redshirt last year.

Sturdy Justin Forsett is expected to transition smoothly into Marshawn Lynch's tailback spot, having already run for 1,674 yards in three years as a backup. Two redshirt freshmen, James Montgomery and Tracy Slocum, are competing for Forsett's backup job. The Bears also return one of the nation's top receiving trios: DeSean Jackson, Robert Jordan and Lavelle Hawkins. Sean

Quick hits

Stadium: California Memorial (artificial, 72,516)

Site: Berkeley, Calif.

Coach: Jeff Tedford (43-20, 5 years)

Offensive coordinator:

Jim Michalczyk (1st year, 6th at school)

Defensive coordinator:

Bob Gregory (6th year)

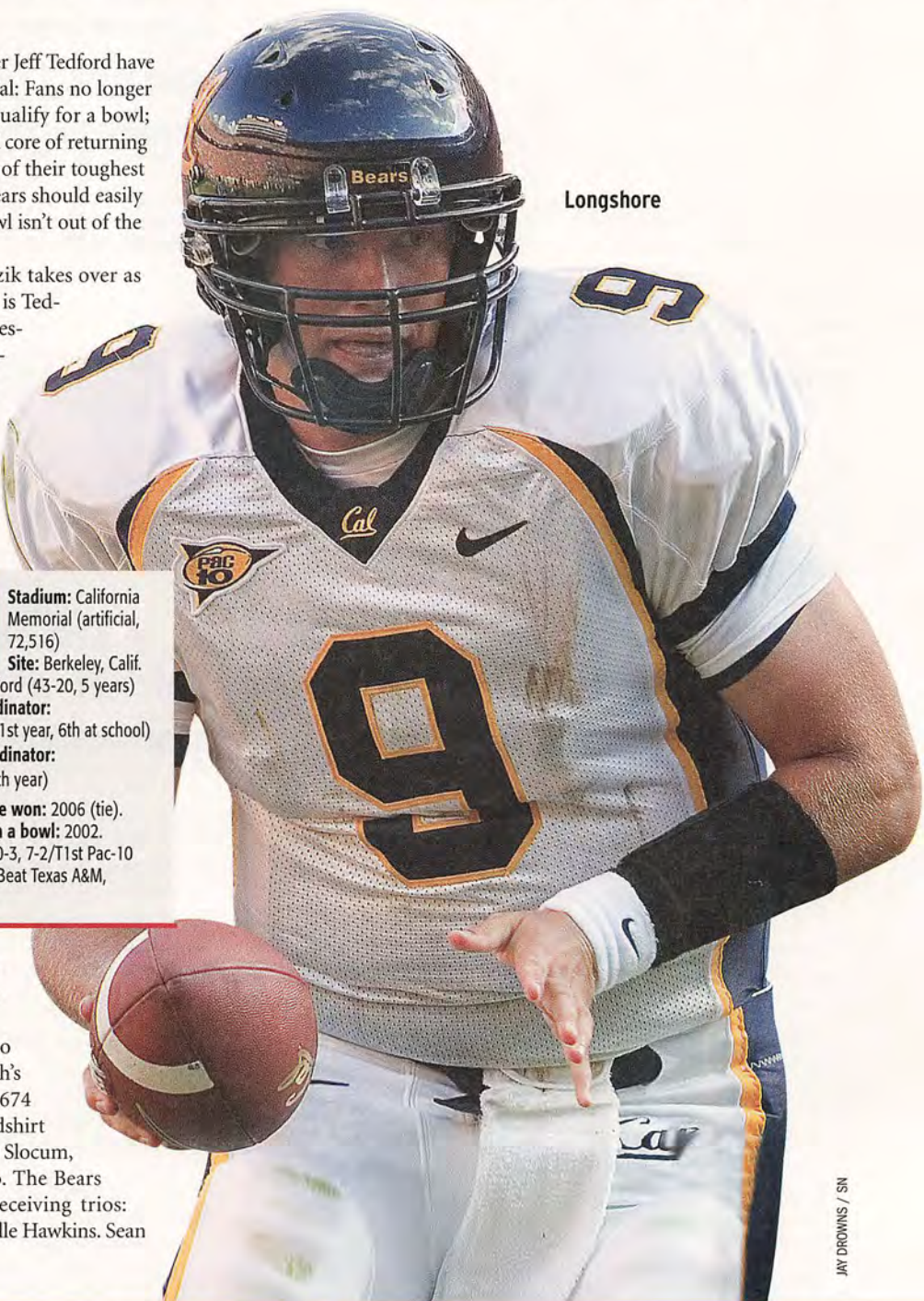
Last league title won: 2006 (tie).

Last year not in a bowl: 2002.

2006 record: 10-3, 7-2/T1st Pac-10

Holiday Bowl: Beat Texas A&M, 45-10

Longshore



JAY DROWNS / SN

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB James Montgomery. If the numbers Justin Forsett compiled as a two-year backup are any indication, the strong and powerful Montgomery will see plenty of action and provide some highlights of his own.

2 CB Darian Hagan. Daymeion Hughes left a considerable void in the secondary, and the Bears will have to plug in one of three redshirt freshmen. Hagan has the inside track because of his outstanding athleticism.

A Pac-10 coach says ...

I love WR **DeSean Jackson**. He can go all the way everytime he touches the ball. But I don't think he's an every-down player. He's like Ted Ginn in that way. ... RB **Justin Forsett** is good. He isn't as big as (Marshawn) Lynch, but he's just as elusive and has quick feet. Still, Forsett isn't an NFL-type of back like Lynch. I think they'll really miss Lynch in the passing game. ... **Nathan Longshore** is a good quarterback who only will improve with another year in the system. ... Their defense slipped last year, and they have a lot of guys to replace.

Young and Daniel Lofton, son of former NFL star James Lofton, are the key backup receivers. Cal also returns versatile tight end Craig Stevens.

OFFENSIVE LINE Cal toyed with the idea of moving all-conference center Alex Mack to tackle, but that might be risky. Such a move would get talented redshirt freshman Chris Guarnero into the lineup, which might improve the unit overall. Spring competition was wide open but mostly because guard Noris Malele and tackle Mike Gibson were out with injuries. Whether Mack moves or not, the unit's success might depend more on health than anything else.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Golden Bears run a standard 4-3 set and typically rely on their linebackers to make most of the stops.

FRONT SEVEN Tackle Matt Malele is the only returning starter on the line, where the competition is wide open. Two redshirt freshmen, tackles Derrick Hill and Michael Costanzo, show promise and could find immediate roles. Cody Jones and Tyson Alualu, both of whom played frequently last year, are likely starters at the ends. Backup Rulon Davis has eye-opening athleticism but must continue to learn the game. Junior Phillip Mbakogu has the talent to make a difference but needs to stay healthy.

Look for linebacker Zack Follett to move to the middle after alternating between the middle and weak side last year. Worrell Williams is the returning starter on the weak side but could move inside. Outside man Justin Moye will be

pushed by Eddie Young.

SECONDARY The competition is stiff to replace cornerback Daymeion Hughes opposite Syd'Quan Thompson. Darian Hagan's athleticism makes him an early favorite ahead of Charles Amadi and Brandon Jones. Robert Peele, a highly regarded sophomore, can move over from rover if needed. Cal has three potential starters for two safety spots: Bernard Hicks, Brandon Hampton and Thomas DeCoud. One of them will have to sit at times, but that's a nice problem to have.

SPECIAL TEAMS The big problem will be to get opponents to punt the ball to Jackson, who ran four kicks back for touchdowns last year. The Bears also bring back steady kicker Tom Schneider, who is on track to become Cal's all-time leading scorer, and punter Andrew Larson, who averaged 42.6 yards. The only open competition seems to be for kick return duties, a job that Forsett, Montgomery or Hawkins will handle if a newcomer doesn't emerge.

COACHING STAFF The most significant offseason move was a regents' decision to hand a lucrative extension to Tedford, who will make at least \$1.8 million this season and as much as \$4.2 million by 2011. The offensive staff changes should not threaten cohesion. Michalczyk already has spent five years as the Bears' line coach, and Kevin Daft, who takes over as quarterbacks coach, worked with Longshore as a graduate assistant last season. Former San Jose State assistant Kenwick Thompson takes over for Bob Foster, who retired as linebackers coach.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Justin Forsett	119	626	5.3	4	
Lavelle Hawkins	3	36	12.0	0	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD		
Nate Longshore	227-377-13	3,021	24		
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
DeSean Jackson	59	1,060	18.0	9	
Lavelle Hawkins	46	705	15.3	5	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
DeSean Jackson	27	493	18.3	4	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Tom Schneider	52	52	15	20	97
Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Brandon Hampton	30	33	63	2/15	
Zack Follett	34	28	62	12.5/53	
Syd'Quan Thompson	35	25	60	2.5/9	
Sacks: Follett (5.5)					
Interceptions: Hampton (2)					

Sacks: Follett (5.5)

Interceptions: Hampton (2)



Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	11	Robert Jordan (5-11, 165, Sr.)
	7	Lavelle Hawkins (6-2, 181, Sr.)
LT	53	Mike Gibson (6-5, 290, Sr.)
	58	Chet Teofilo (6-4, 305, Jr.)
LG	63	Brian De La Puente (6-4, 306, Jr.)
	70	Mark Boskovich (6-4, 286, So.)
C	51	Alex Mack (6-5, 300, Jr.)
	54	Chris Guarnero (6-3, 270, Fr.)
RG	55	Noris Malele (6-3, 294, Jr.)
	70	Mark Boskovich (6-4, 286, So.)
RT	79	Mike Tepper (6-7, 336, Jr.)
	76	Matt Laird (6-7, 295, So.)
TE	82	Craig Stevens (6-5, 254, Sr.)
	6	Cameron Morrah (6-4, 248, So.)
WR	1	DeSean Jackson (6-0, 166, Jr.)
	86	Sam DeSa (5-10, 195, Sr.)
QB	9	Nate Longshore (6-5, 233, Jr.)
	8	Kyle Reed (6-3, 220, So.)
RB	20	Justin Forsett (5-8, 186, Sr.)
	21	James Montgomery (5-10, 205, Fr.)
FB	23	Will Ta'u'ou'u (6-0, 250, So.)
	33	Brian Holley (5-10, 232, So.)
K	15	Tom Schneider (6-1, 191, Sr.)
KR	20	Justin Forsett (5-8, 186, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Tennessee	18-35	1-2
9-8	at Colorado State		1-0
9-15	Louisiana Tech		1-0
9-22	Arizona	20-24	3-2
9-29	at Oregon	45-24	2-3
10-13	Oregon State	41-13	2-3
10-20	at UCLA	38-24	3-2
10-27	at Arizona State	49-21	4-1
11-3	Washington State	21-3	2-3
11-10	USC	9-23	1-4
11-17	at Washington	31-24, OT	5-0
12-1	at Stanford	26-17	5-0

■ Toughest game • Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Pac-10 schedule strength: 7th

>The Series Stanford (44-54-11): Jeff Tedford has beaten the Cardinal like a drum, allowing Cal to focus on bigger fish as it climbs the national pecking order.

>The Showdown vs. USC: It's the Roadrunner vs. the Coyote. Just as Cal gets close, it gets whacked. If the Bears couldn't get the Trojans last year, what makes them think they can this year vs. a loaded Trojans team? Cal is 2-5 vs. USC this decade.

>The Smack Rose Bowl or bust? It looks like bust for a team with too many questions on defense. If the Trojans' visit doesn't doom Cal, trips to Oregon and Arizona State may do the trick. But if the Bears open with a win over Tennessee, this will be a confident team with lots of momentum.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	91	Cody Jones (6-5, 255, So.)
	95	Rulon Davis (6-5, 275, Jr.)
T	69	Matt Malele (6-1, 335, Sr.)
	77	Michael Costanzo (6-3, 300, Fr.)
T	98	Mika Kane (6-3, 297, Jr.)
	76	Derrick Hill (6-3, 280, Fr.)
E	90	Tyson Alualu (6-4, 288, So.)
	93	John Allen (6-1, 248, Sr.)
SLB	16	Justin Moye (6-1, 228, Sr.)
	56	Zack Follett (6-2, 237, Jr.)
MLB	1	Worrell Williams (6-2, 256, Jr.)
	55	Greg Van Hoesen (6-4, 227, Sr.)
WLB	15	Anthony Felder (6-4, 231, Jr.)
	56	Zack Follett (6-2, 237, Jr.)
CB	7	Robert Peele (5-10, 187, So.)
	27	Charles Amadi (5-11, 175, Fr.)
FS	4	Thomas DeCoud (6-3, 195, Sr.)
	2	Bernard Hicks (6-1, 198, Jr.)
SS	2	Bernard Hicks (6-1, 198, Jr.)
	29	Marcus Ezeff (6-0, 194, So.)
CB	5	Syd'Quan Thompson (5-11, 178, So.)
	26	Darian Hagan (6-1, 180, Fr.)
P	11	Andrew Larson (6-2, 190, Sr.)
PR	1	DeSean Jackson (6-0, 166, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold • True freshman



BEAVERS

Matching last season's 10-win total probably is a reach considering that was the second-most victories in school history—and the Beavers needed 14 games, including a stunning Sun Bowl triumph, to get there. On the other hand, the only Pac-10 teams with more wins than Oregon State's 38 over the last five seasons are USC and California. With 18 returning starters, a bowl bid seems certain.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Beavers like the one-back set because it puts another receiver on the field. Considering the quality of their No. 1 back and the increased

Quick hits

Stadium: Reser (artificial, 46,000). **Site:** Corvallis, Ore.

Coach: Mike Riley (38-34, 6 years)

Offensive coordinator: Danny Langsdorf (3rd year, 5th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Mark Banker (5th year, 7th at school)

Last league title won: 2000 (tie). **Last year not in a bowl:** 2005.

2006 record: 10-4, 6-3/3rd Pac-10

Sun Bowl: Beat Missouri, 39-38

depth at receiver, it obviously works well for them and still keeps the offense balanced.

SKILL POSITIONS The only serious question is at quarterback, with strong-armed Sean Canfield holding the edge over Lyle Moevao. What should take the pressure off Canfield—or Moevao—is a running game built around Yvenson Bernard, who will be seeking his third consecutive 1,000-yard season, a feat accomplished one other time in Corvallis. Bernard isn't the fastest, strongest or most elusive of running backs; he simply gains yards and gets the job done.

Split end Sammie Stroughter has the hands, size and speed to excel as a go-to pass catcher, and Brandon Powers is a possession receiver out of the slotback position. Anthony Wheat-Brown can get physical downfield, either as a blocker or receiver. Replacing tight end Joe Newton is a genuine concern. There was a big falloff at that position two years ago when he was out with an injury. The top candidate would be redshirt freshman Gabe Miller, but he's com-



Stroughter

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Sean Canfield. Fans wore out computer keys early last season, clamoring on message boards for Canfield to play. Coaches resisted. Now he's the untested element of an offense that will be strong if he is.

2 OLB Keaton Kristick. If any of OSU's super linebacking trio gets hurt, Kristick will be the guy to step in. This talented sophomore is expected to be the star of the future, the man around whom future defenses will be built.

A Pac-10 coach says ...

I like Oregon State. **Mike Riley** always does a good job in having his team prepared. They are well-coached. ... Their offensive line is as good as anyone's in the Pac-10. ... The key will be finding a quarterback. I know they like **Sean Canfield**, who struggled when he got chances last year. He'll have to fight for the job. ... I think WR **Sammie Stroughter** is the most underrated player in the league. I know when we played them, he worried us. ... You have to love that **Yvenson Bernard** kid. He's a little guy, but he's a tough runner.

ing off his second Achilles' tendon surgery.

OFFENSIVE LINE Four starters return with guards Jeremy Perry and Roy Schuening and center Kyle DeVan forming the best interior trio in the conference. Perry, who shared the league's freshman of the year award in 2005 and was first-team all-conference as a sophomore, should be considered among the nation's top all-around guards. The only opening is at left tackle, and there are plenty of candidates. Experience won't be a problem there because Canfield is lefthanded, meaning blindside protection will be provided by right tackle Andy Levitre, a returning starter.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Beavers have shown they can adjust their basic 4-3 to personnel on hand, but it always comes back to their trio of aggressive, athletic linebackers. They're in the middle of everything, whether it's stopping the run, bringing the pressure or covering short routes. And they do it so well the entire defense prospers.

FRONT SEVEN It doesn't really start up front because returning starters Joey LaRocque, Derrick Doggett and Alan Darlin have to be included in any discussion of the league's best linebacking unit. The line returns two starters in end Jeff Van Orsow and tackle Curtis Coker, and the other end, Dorian Smith, ranked fifth last year among Pac-10 defenders in sacks as part of a rotation. Line depth also should be vastly improved with the infusion of junior college players.

SECONDARY The Beavers re-

turn three starters, but the one loss was a big one: strong safety Sabby Piscitelli. One reason OSU covered so well last year was that Piscitelli covered up for a lot of mistakes. Cornerbacks Keenan Lewis and Brandon Hughes made big strides from their freshman seasons to last fall, and if they continue to improve, the coverage should be solid. Free safety Al Afalava is a big-time hitter, but he'll need to take on more of a leadership role.

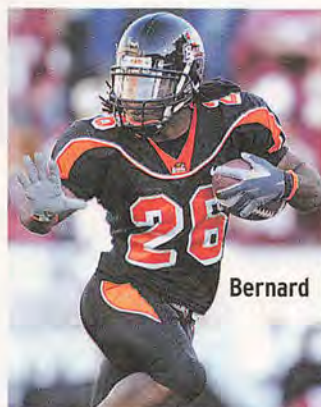
SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Alexis Serna enters his senior season with 106 consecutive extra points and 62 career field goals, including 21 in a 2006 season that included a career-long 58-yarder. As a true freshman last season, Kyle Loomis averaged 41.3 yards per punt. Stroughter averaged 15.4 yards on punt returns and brought three back for touchdowns. Reserve corner Coye Francies is a solid kick-off return man.

COACHING STAFF Mike Riley quieted critics—and there were many after that 2-3 start last season—with a big finish that included an upset of USC, a bragging-rights win over Oregon and that dramatic rally past Missouri in the Sun Bowl. But he knows his status again will be questioned with any stumble this season. Riley lost only one assistant coach, special teams coordinator Bruce Read, who defected to the NFL. Read will be replaced by Dave Ungerer, who previously handled special teams duty at California and Alabama.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Yvenson Bernard	296	1,307	4.4	12	
Clinton Polk	63	248	3.9	1	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Sean Canfield	28-45-2	335	2		
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Sammie Stroughter	74	1,293	17.5	5	
Yvenson Bernard	43	276	6.4	1	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Coye Francies	22	493	22.4	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Alexis Serna	45	45	22	29	111
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Joey LaRocque	44	54	98	6.5/18	
Derrick Doggett	64	23	87	14.5/78	
Alan Darlin	39	33	72	12.5/63	

Sacks: Dorian Smith (9)
Interceptions: Doggett (3)



Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
8-30	Utah*		2-3
9-6	at Cincinnati*		
9-15	Idaho State		
9-22	at Arizona State	44-10	2-3
9-29	▲ UCLA	7-25	1-4
10-6	Arizona	17-10	4-1
10-13	at California	13-41	3-2
10-27	Stanford	30-7	4-1
11-3	■ at USC	33-31	1-4
11-10	Washington	27-17	3-2
11-17	at Washington State	6-13	2-3
12-1	● at Oregon	30-28	3-2

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Pac-10 schedule strength: 10th

>The Series Oregon (45-55-10): Neither team has won on the other's home field in the past 10 seasons. And each squad enters the year with a question at quarterback. Which team will be better at QB come December?

>The Showdown at Cal: The Beavers have won their last three visits to Berkeley. But history won't help an Oregon State defense that will be stretched by one of the league's top offenses.

>The Smack Beaver believers? The nonconference schedule is devoid of any big tests. Good, because the offense needs to rely on the running game early on before facing a Pac-10 schedule that has OSU playing five of nine games on the road.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	19	Sammie Stroughter (6-0, 188, Sr.)
	3	Chris Johnson (6-1, 180, Jr.)
LT	76	Tavita Thompson (6-6, 319, Jr.)
		Michael Cole (6-7, 290, Jr.)
LG	62	Jeremy Perry (6-2, 313, Jr.)
	51	Adam Speer (6-3, 276, Jr.)
C	75	Kyle DeVan (6-2, 294, Sr.)
	65	Marcus Henderson (6-5, 285, Jr.)
RG	67	Roy Schuening (6-4, 318, Sr.)
	73	Gregg Peat (6-3, 301, So.)
RT	66	Andy Levitre (6-3, 324, Jr.)
	63	Ryan Pohl (6-3, 261, Fr.)
TE	83	Howard Croom (6-3, 241, So.)
	85	John Reese (6-3, 224, So.)
WR	17	Anthony Wheat-Brown (6-1, 218, Sr.)
	7	Kyle Brown (6-4, 212, Fr.)
WR	82	Brandon Powers (6-2, 215, Sr.)
	29	Shane Morales (6-1, 197, Jr.)
QB	5	Sean Canfield (6-4, 222, So.)
	3	Lyle Moevao (5-11, 225, So.)
RB	26	Yvenson Bernard (5-9, 204, Sr.)
	22	Clinton Polk (6-2, 214, Sr.)
K	13	Alexis Serna (5-8, 162, Sr.)
KR	4	Coye Francies (6-1, 177, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	93	Dorian Smith (6-3, 258, Sr.)
	91	Naymon Frank (6-5, 312, Sr.)
T	53	Gerard Lee (6-1, 280, Sr.)
	96	Williams Akau'ola Vea (6-2, 282, Sr.)
T	98	Curtis Coker (6-1, 309, Sr.)
	99	Pennell Booth (6-1, 302, Jr.)
E	49	Jeff Van Orsow (6-4, 266, Sr.)
	90	Victor Butler (6-2, 233, Jr.)
SLB	45	Derrick Doggett (6-3, 210, Sr.)
	32	Keaton Kristick (6-3, 229, So.)
MLB	43	Alan Darlin (6-1, 251, Sr.)
	41	Bryant Cornell (6-1, 240, Jr.)
WLB	42	Joey LaRocque (6-2, 230, Sr.)
	56	Eric Moala Liava'a (6-0, 236, Jr.)
CB	6	Keenan Lewis (6-1, 194, Jr.)
	4	Coye Francies (6-1, 177, Sr.)
FS	9	Al Afalava (5-11, 198, Jr.)
	23	Bryan Payton (6-2, 211, Jr.)
SS	39	Daniel Drayton (5-10, 204, Sr.)
	44	Greg Laybourn (5-10, 201, Jr.)
CB	36	Brandon Hughes (5-11, 174, Jr.)
	21	Tim Clark (6-0, 175, So.)
P	18	Kyle Loomis (6-2, 195, So.)
PR	19	Sammie Stroughter (6-0, 189, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman



ARIZONA STATE SUN DEVILS

SN projection **5th, 7-5, Emerald Bowl** National rank **41**

Despite three straight bowl appearances, ASU scrapped the up-and-comer model (Dirk Koetter) for a proven winner (Dennis Erickson). Personable but peripatetic, Erickson has expectations high in Tempe.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY ASU's fast-moving offense will stretch the field with multiple receivers or use two tight ends. Three-step passes and shotguns will be common, and the running game will be potent.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Quarterback Rudy Carpenter has solid arm strength and athleticism. He is complemented by a matured line and receivers and a multifaceted rushing game that features powerful Ryan Torain and agile Keegan Herring. Rudy Burgess, the team's active leader in receptions, yards and touchdowns, again is a full-time receiver after playing some cornerback last season. He's joined by Michael Jones, Chris McGaha, Kyle Williams, an explosive playmaker and Brandon Smith,



ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

who has the speed to thrive in this system. Shaun DeWitty is the backfield's best pass-blocker. Tight end is a concern, unless Brent Miller can replace his younger brother, Zach, or talented Florida transfer Dane Guthrie can put it all together. Tough, resilient center Mike Pollak leads a veteran line.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Sun Devils hope to be quicker with a 4-3 look that will be more about reacting than planning.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The addition of prolific junior college transfer Morris Wooten upgrades last year's surprisingly good linebacking unit. He joins former Dodgers minor-leaguer Mike Nixon and Travis Goethel, a strong pass defender. Depth at the position also is strong. Free safety Josh Barrett, who has surprising speed for his size, leads the secondary. Troy Nolan, who was sidelined by injury last season, will compete with Jeremy Payton at the other safety spot. At corner-

Quick hits

Stadium: Sun Devil (grass, 71,706). **Site:** Tempe, Ariz.
Coach: Dennis Erickson (1st year; 148-65-1 overall, 18 years)
Offensive coordinator: Rich Olson (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Craig Bray (1st year)

Last league title won: 1996. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2003.

2006 record: 7-6, 4-5/T5th Pac-10

Hawaii Bowl: Lost to Hawaii, 41-24

Returning leaders: Rushing—Ryan Torain (223 att., 1,229 yards, 7 Tds). Passing—Rudy Carpenter (184-332-14, 2,523 yards, 23 TDs). Receiving—Michael Jones (20 rec., 318 yards, 3 TDs).

back, Justin Tryon has reliable skills and solid instincts. Dynamic freshman Omar Bolden could give ASU a needed boost at the other corner. The line is a concern except for two starters, prolific end Dexter Davis and consistent tackle Michael Marquardt.

SPECIAL TEAMS Thomas Weber's strong leg helps compensate for the loss of Jesse Ainsworth, and returning punter Jonathan Johnson is reliable. Williams, McGaha and Burgess are top punt return candidates. Tryon

was impressive on kickoff returns last season, and Tyrice Thompson showed promise in that role during the spring.

COACHING STAFF Erickson kept two Koetter assistants, defensive line coach Grady Stretz and cornerbacks coach Al Simmons, while adding several former staffers. Matt Lubick, once with Erickson at Oregon State, is the recruiting coordinator and safeties coach. Tight ends coach Dan Cozzetto has experience with Erickson and at ASU.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	1	Michael Jones (6-4, 208, Jr.)
	2	Brandon Smith (6-2, 200, So.)
LT	62	Brandon Rodd (6-4, 300, Sr.)
	75	Richard Tuitu'u (6-4, 350, So.)
LG	73	Robert Gustavis (6-3, 303, Sr.)
	67	Shawn Lauvao (6-3, 307, So.)
C	76	Mike Pollak (6-4, 292, Sr.)
	56	Thomas Altieri (6-2, 292, So.)
RG	63	Paul Fanaika (6-6, 359, Jr.)
	67	Shawn Lauvao (6-3, 307, So.)
RT	78	Zach Krula (6-7, 320, Sr.)
	73	Julius Oriekwu (6-7, 317, Sr.)
TE	87	Brent Miller (6-5, 237, Sr.)
	80	Dane Guthrie (6-3, 267, Jr.)
WR	16	Nate Kimbrough (6-1, 189, Jr.)
	13	Chris McGaha (6-1, 189, So.)
WR	3	Rudy Burgess (5-10, 188, Sr.)
	6	Kyle Williams (5-10, 185, So.)
QB	12	Rudy Carpenter (6-2, 199, Jr.)
	15	Danny Sullivan (6-4, 236, So.)
RB	26	Ryan Torain (6-1, 213, Sr.)
	24	Keegan Herring (5-10, 186, Jr.)
K	38	Thomas Weber (6-1, 202, Fr.)
KR	4	Justin Tryon (5-10, 180, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	85	Kellen Mills (6-3, 243, Sr.)
	97	Luis Vasquez (6-3, 247, Jr.)
T	77	Michael Marquardt (6-4, 295, Sr.)
	71	Saia Falahola (6-2, 301, Fr.)
T	90	David Smith (6-3, 280, Jr.)
	59	Jon Hargis (6-4, 310, Fr.)
E	58	Dexter Davis (6-2, 247, So.)
	95	Eric Tanner (6-2, 253, Jr.)
SLB	44	Travis Goethel (6-3, 229, So.)
	2	Ryan McFoy (6-2, 201, So.)
MLB	52	Morris Wooten (6-1, 237, Jr.)
	45	Jamarr Robinson (6-2, 234, Fr.)
WLB	25	Mike Nixon (6-3, 232, So.)
	46	Jeff Bereuter (6-3, 218, Fr.)
CB	23	Chris Baloney (6-1, 194, Sr.)
	21	Chad Green (5-11, 184, Sr.)
FS	19	Josh Barrett (6-3, 231, Sr.)
	22	Rodney Cox (6-1, 219, Jr.)
SS	7	Jeremy Payton (6-1, 210, Jr.)
	14	Troy Nolan (6-2, 204, Jr.)
CB	4	Justin Tryon (5-10, 180, Sr.)
	8	Jarrell Holman (6-0, 194, Jr.)
P	35	Jonathan Johnson (6-1, 226, Sr.)
PR	6	Kyle Williams (5-10, 185, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	San Jose State	
9-8	Colorado	21-3
9-15	San Diego State	
9-22	Oregon State	10-44
9-29	at Stanford	38-3
10-6	at Washington State	47-14
10-13	Washington	26-23, OT
10-27	▲ California	21-49
11-3	at Oregon	13-48
11-10	at UCLA	12-24
11-22	■ USC*	21-28
12-1	● Arizona	28-14

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Pac-10 schedule strength: 8th

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 OT Zach Krula. Rudy Carpenter will be better protected and the offense more productive if Krula, a gigantic blocker, can shake off the rust that has built up during nearly two years worth of injuries.

2 DE Luis Vasquez. Without departed end Kyle Caldwell, ASU's defensive line looks shaky unless Vasquez, a highly regarded junior college sack artist, can make a quick adjustment to Division I.

DUCKS

SN projection **6th, 6-6, Hawaii Bowl** National rank **52**

Oregon has bounced back after every other disappointing season in Mike Bellotti's dozen years as coach. There is optimism because many key players return. The Ducks weren't as good as a 4-0 start that included a controversial win over Oklahoma, but neither were they as bad as they looked in the Las Vegas Bowl against BYU, their fourth straight loss in a 7-6 season.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The third season of running the spread should see an evolution to better use of the running game with a new coordinator (Chip Kelly) calling plays and a head coach who felt the Ducks got too reliant on the passing



TOM HAUCK FOR SN

game late last season.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL The quarterbacks who shared time

the past two seasons, Dennis Dixon and Brady Leaf, are both back after combining for 16 interceptions. Why not remove some of the pressure by giving more work to running back Jonathan Stewart, who averaged 5.4 yards—on only 14 carries per game? That's hardly enough work for a 230-pounder who can power through—or outrun—tacklers. Three of five starting linemen are back, led by all-leaguer Max Unger, who could move from tackle to center. Even with his own inconsistency in a receiving corps where it stood out, Jaison Williams did reach 984 yards during his sophomore season.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Ducks, with two freshman cornerbacks, played it safe in their 4-3 alignment last year. But the corners held up well, and there could be a need this year for more blitzing by linebackers and the occasional safety to help out an untested line.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The Ducks are deep at the corners with Walter Thurmond and Jaius Byrd. Rover Patrick Chung can play anywhere in the secondary, creating options on how best to replace J.D. Nelson at free safety. A.J. Tuitele will be one of the linebackers, and Kwame Agyeman played extensively on the outside last season. Up front, the top two linemen are gone, but Jeremy Gibbs was a standout when healthy, and end Victor

Quick hits

Stadium: Autzen (artificial, 54,000). **Site:** Eugene, Ore.
Coach: Mike Bellotti (97-48, 12 years; 118-73-2 overall, 17 years)
Offensive coordinator: Chip Kelly (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Nick Aliotti (9th year, 17th at school)

Last league title won: 2001. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2004.

2006 record: 7-6, 4-5/T5th Pac-10

Las Vegas Bowl: Lost to BYU, 38-8

Returning leaders: Rushing—Jonathan Stewart (183 att., 981 yards, 10 TDs). Passing—Dennis Dixon (197-322-14, 2,143 yards, 12 TDs). Receiving—Jaison Williams (68 rec., 984 yards, 6 TDs).

Filipe and tackle Cole Linehan return from injuries to starting roles. Some freshmen might need to step into the mix.

SPECIAL TEAMS After losing both their kicker and punter, the Ducks got welcome news that Tom Osborne has returned as coordinator of the kicking units. In a previous stint at Oregon, his units were among the best in the nation. Stewart, who led the league in kickoff returns the past two years, ranked first nationally in 2005.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos. No.	Name
WR 4	Jaison Williams (6-5, 240, Jr.)
	91 Rory Cavaille (6-3, 210, So.)
LT 60	Max Unger (6-5, 306, Jr.)
	71 Mark Lewis (6-4, 308, Jr.)
LG 61	Josh Tschirgi (6-4, 299, Sr.)
	68 C.E. Kaiser (6-4, 293, Fr.)
C 51	Jeff Kendall (6-3, 297, Jr.)
	54 Jordan Holmes (6-4, 295, Fr.)
RG 66	Pat So'oalo (6-5, 332, Sr.)
	63 Jon Teague (6-2, 301, Jr.)
RT 75	Geoff Schwartz (6-7, 337, Sr.)
	78 Jacob Hucko (6-7, 317, Jr.)
TE 83	Ed Dickson (6-5, 240, So.)
	81 Ryan Keeling (6-5, 254, Jr.)
WR 19	Brian Paysinger (6-2, 208, Sr.)
	3 Cameron Colvin (6-2, 207, Sr.)
WR 21	Garren Strong (6-3, 203, Sr.)
	82 Drew Davis* (6-1, 202, Fr.)
QB 10	Dennis Dixon (6-4, 205, Sr.)
	16 Brady Leaf (6-5, 225, Sr.)
RB 28	Jonathan Stewart (5-11, 230, Jr.)
	24 Jeremiah Johnson (5-9, 205, Jr.)
	Daniel Padilla* (6-1, 210, Fr.)
KR 28	Jonathan Stewart (5-11, 230, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos. No.	Name
E 49	Nick Reed (6-2, 255, Jr.)
	88 Brandon Blair (6-7, 250, Fr.)
T 97	Cole Linehan (6-4, 304, Jr.)
	91 Ra'Shon Harris (6-5, 321, Jr.)
T 90	David Faateete (6-2, 310, Sr.)
	43 Michael Speed (6-4, 258, Jr.)
E 39	Will Tukuafu (6-3, 279, So.)
	56 Victor Filipe (6-2, 282, Sr.)
LB 34	A.J. Tuitele (5-11, 226, Sr.)
	25 Kevin Garrett (5-11, 220, So.)
LB 40	John Bacon (6-3, 227, Jr.)
	25 Spencer Paysinger (6-2, 222, Fr.)
CB 32	Jaius Byrd (5-11, 208, So.)
	17 Willie Glasper (5-11, 184, So.)
S 13	Jerome Boyd (6-2, 220, Jr.)
	30 Kwame Agyeman (5-11, 205, Sr.)
S 15	Patrick Chung (5-11, 208, Jr.)
	1 Marvin Johnson (5-10, 197, Fr.)
S 20	Matthew Harper (6-0, 181, Sr.)
	2 Terrell Ward (5-10, 180, So.)
CB 6	Walter Thurmond (6-0, 180, So.)
	7 Chad Peppers (5-10, 180, Fr.)
P 80	Josh Syria (6-3, 232, Jr.)
PR 15	Patrick Chung (5-11, 208, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Houston	
9-8	■ at Michigan	
9-15	Fresno State	31-24
9-22	at Stanford	48-10
9-29	▲ California	24-45
10-13	Washington State	23-34
10-20	at Washington	34-14
10-27	USC	10-35
11-3	Arizona State	48-13
11-15	at Arizona*	10-37
11-24	at UCLA	30-20
12-1	● Oregon State	28-30

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Pac-10 schedule strength: 5th

COACHING STAFF Kelly, a guru of the spread at New Hampshire, was lured to replace Gary Crowton, who went to LSU. Osborne's return (also to coach tight ends) was made possible by the retirement of the Pac-10's most veteran assistant, Neal Zoumboukos.



1 WR Derrick Jones. He showed no rust in the spring after sitting out most of the past three seasons because of academic issues and an ankle injury. The Ducks need speed and sure hands, and a healthy Jones provides both.

2 LB John Bacon. A junior who played little last year, Bacon will be under pressure to produce. He needs to hog playing time because two nonscholarship players and a couple of freshmen are behind him on the depth chart.

ARIZONA WILDCATS

SN projection **7th, 6-6, Las Vegas Bowl** National rank **56**

Ranking 115th nationally in total offense doesn't cut it in the Pac-10 or anywhere, no matter how good the defense is. So coach Mike Stoops replaced much of his offensive staff and hired coordinator Sonny Dykes, a co-architect of Texas Tech's quick-strike spread offense last year. The system has proved effective; Arizona players have not. **OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY** There's a video-game feel to the new system, which uses I-back formations, two-back formations,

Thomas is the team's best all-around receiving talent. B.J. Dennard could break out after sitting out most of last season because of an injury and personal reasons. Terrell Reese, a high jumper, could find an immediate role at receiver, as might tall Delashaun Dean. Several tight ends—Travis Bell, Brandyn McCall and physical A.J. Simmons—will be targets. Chris Jennings is the most talented rusher; backup Xavier Smith needs consistency.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Stoops will run the same rugged multiple 4-3 that he always has used at Arizona. The team posted the Pac-10's top turnover margin last year.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL

Well-built end Louis Holmes didn't become the star he was expected to be out of junior college, partly because he couldn't make quick mental adjustments. A year in D-I should help. Antoine Cason, a talented cover corner, and Spencer Larsen, a crafty linebacker with a nose

for the ball, anchor a veteran defense that is respect-able against the pass and run. Cameron Nelson's athleticism and pass defense make him a natural at nickel back; he also could start at strong safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS Freshman Alex Zendejas, nephew of Arizona's career field goal record holder Max Zendejas, will battle career backup Jason Bondzio for the kicking job. The team hopes former walk-on Keenyn Crier



JOHN CORDES FOR SN

four-receiver sets and just about anything else imaginable. Receivers might see their numbers double.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL A benefit to using the spread is that quarterback Willie Tuitama can get rid of the ball more quickly, potentially sparing him the concussions that plagued him last season. That's good because the line, though it has more experience, can't guarantee him time. Mike

Quick hits

Stadium: Arizona (grass, 56,800). **Site:** Tucson, Ariz.
Coach: Mike Stoops (12-22, 3 years)
Offensive coordinator: Sonny Dykes (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Mark Stoops (4th year)

Last league title won: 1993 (tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 1998.
2006 record: 6-6, 4-5/T5th Pac-10

Returning leaders: Rushing—Chris Jennings (105 att., 451 yards, 3 TDs). Passing—Willie Tuitama (118-211-6, 1,335 yards, 7 TDs). Receiving—Mike Thomas (50 rec., 597 yards, 2 TDs).

can be the punter. Thomas is a logical punt returner, but the new system could require that he rest while not on offense. Instead, quick defensive backs Devin Ross, Mike Turner and Cason could handle returns.

COACHING STAFF Stoops plans to leave Dykes and Co. alone, except for implementing some power running options. How long he'll stick to that is a big question. Stoops, who's on the hot seat after three mediocre seasons, can't afford to have much patience if the offense sputters.

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at BYU	16-13
9-8	Northern Arizona	
9-15	New Mexico	
9-22	at California	24-20
9-29	• Washington State	27-17
10-6	at Oregon State	10-17
10-13	■ at USC	3-20
10-20	Stanford	20-7
10-27	at Washington	10-21
11-3	UCLA	7-27
11-15	Oregon*	37-10
12-1	▲ at Arizona State	14-28

*Thursday

■ Toughest game • Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Pac-10 schedule strength: 9th

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	84	Terrell Turner (6-2, 170, So.)
	11	Terrell Reese (6-4, 195, Fr.)
LT	76	Peter Graniello (6-6, 296, Sr.)
	66	James Tretheway (6-6, 300, Jr.)
LG	68	Daniel Borg (6-5, 275, So.)
	52	Bill Wacholz (6-6, 294, Jr.)
C	50	Blake Kerley (6-2, 273, So.)
	64	Colin Baxter (6-4, 295, Fr.)
RG	75	Joe Longacre (6-3, 303, Jr.)
	57	Jovon Hayes (6-4, 295, Fr.)
RT	77	Eben Britton (6-6, 280, So.)
	70	Cory Elmore (6-4, 260, Fr.)
TE	86	Travis Bell (6-6, 225, Jr.)
	87	Brandyn McCall (6-4, 245, Sr.)
H-B	49	Earl Mitchell (6-2, 250, So.)
	45	Brandon Lopez (6-1, 224, Jr.)
WR	10	Mike Thomas (5-8, 173, Jr.)
	89	Bobby McCoy (6-1, 182, Jr.)
QB	7	Willie Tuitama (6-3, 218, Jr.)
	12	Tyler Lyon (6-5, 215, Fr.)
RB	28	Chris Jennings (5-10, 225, Sr.)
	30	Xavier Smith (5-11, 196, So.)
K	13	Jason Bondzio (5-9, 168, Jr.)
KR	10	Mike Thomas (5-8, 173, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	1	Louis Holmes (6-6, 270, Sr.)
	83	D'Aundre Reed (6-4, 225, Fr.)
T	96	Yaniv Barnett (6-1, 285, Sr.)
	46	Donald Horton (6-0, 259, So.)
T	54	Lionel Dotson (6-4, 278, Sr.)
	94	Lolomana Mikaele (6-2, 260, Fr.)
E	97	Johnathan Turner (6-3, 250, Jr.)
	53	Jason Parker (6-3, 258, Sr.)
SLB	39	Dane Krogstad (6-2, 236, Sr.)
	41	James Alford (6-1, 222, Jr.)
MLB	33	Ronnie Palmer (6-3, 239, Jr.)
	56	Cole Graybill (6-3, 236, Fr.)
WLB	51	Spencer Larsen (6-1, 236, Sr.)
	15	Xavier Kelley (5-11, 195, So.)
CB	3	Wilrey Fontenot (5-9, 174, Sr.)
	14	Marquis Hundley (6-0, 185, Jr.)
FS	8	Dominic Patrick (6-1, 207, Sr.)
	32	Nate Ness (6-2, 190, Jr.)
SS	20	Cameron Nelson (6-1, 175, So.)
	31	Michael Klyce (6-0, 193, Jr.)
CB	5	Antoine Cason (6-1, 182, Sr.)
	2	Mike Turner (5-11, 170, Fr.)
P	47	Keenyn Crier (6-1, 180, Fr.)
PR	10	Mike Thomas (5-8, 173, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold • *True freshman

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB Earl Mitchell. A solid blocker, Mitchell should get the ball more often in the new offense. The team intends to use a variety of formations, and those will be more effective if the explosive Mitchell is a threat.

2 DE D'Aundre Reed. Arizona has two returning starters at end—Louis Holmes and Johnathan Turner—but Reed's strength and leverage could upgrade the attack. If he doesn't supplant Turner, he'll back up both spots.



COUGARS

SN projection **8th, 4-8**National rank **79**

Because the Cougars lost the final three games of 2006 by a margin of 109-63 to finish 6-6, a positive start is imperative—though not likely. They begin with a trip to Wisconsin and go to USC three weeks later. Only one of the first five games will be played in Pullman. It'll probably take a late rally to reach .500.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Cougars, with their one-back, three-receiver set, already are wide open. They'll enter the season with an unsettled running game but a veteran quarterback and depth at receiver.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Alex Brink completed 60.9 percent

of his passes for 2,899 yards last season, and those numbers should improve in his fourth season as a starter. There are slotback Michael Bumpus and flanker Brandon Gibson to throw to, and there's good potential among the other receivers. But the team can't throw on every play, so running back Dwight Tardy needs to be more consistent; his backups are in doubt because of personal issues, injuries and academics. Four experienced starters return on the line, but there's an opening at left tackle that could be filled by junior college transfer Vaughn Lesuma or redshirt freshman Joe Epele. There's no proven depth.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos. No. Name

WR	86	Charles Dillon (6-0, 190, Sr.)
	15	Benny Ward (6-3, 186, Jr.)
LT	55	Vaughn Lesuma (6-5, 340, Jr.)
	67	Joe Epele (6-7, 277, Fr.)
LG	70	Bobby Byrd (6-7, 316, Sr.)
	72	Derek Hunter (6-3, 280, Jr.)
C	69	Kenny Alfred (6-2, 293, So.)
	71	Grady Maxwell (6-2, 325, Fr.)
RG	74	Andy Roof (6-5, 299, Jr.)
	54	Jacob McKinney (6-3, 278, Jr.)
RT	60	Dan Rowlands (6-5, 290, Jr.)
	76	Micah Hannam (6-4, 292, Fr.)
TE	41	Jed Collins (6-2, 251, Sr.)
	48	Ben Woodard (6-5, 249, Jr.)
WR	5	Michael Bumpus (6-0, 195, Sr.)
	87	Keith Rosenberg (5-10, 194, Fr.)
WR	4	Brandon Gibson (6-1, 204, Jr.)
	84	Scott Selby (6-5, 231, Jr.)
QB	10	Alex Brink (6-3, 215, Sr.)
	17	Gary Rogers (6-7, 234, Jr.)
RB	31	Dwight Tardy (5-11, 212, So.)
	34	Chris Ivory (5-11, 213, So.)
K	19	Romeen Abdolmohammadi (6-0, 228, Sr.)
KR	86	Charles Dillon (6-0, 190, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos. No. Name

E	96	Mike Graise (6-3, 214, Jr.)
	93	Kevin Kooyman (6-5, 236, So.)
T	75	Ropati Pitoitua (6-8, 291, Sr.)
	77	Matt Eichelberger (6-4, 312, Jr.)
T	40	Aaron Johnson (6-7, 317, Sr.)
	92	Fevaea'i Ahmu (6-1, 289, Jr.)
E	58	Matt Mullennix (6-7, 257, Sr.)
	9	Lance Broadus (6-2, 219, Sr.)
SLB	38	Cory Evans (6-1, 227, Jr.)
	45	Andy Mattingly (6-4, 229, So.)
MLB	52	Greg Trent (5-11, 219, Jr.)
		Wyman Alexander (6-2, 245, Jr.)
WLB	51	Jason Stripling (5-11, 220, So.)
	44	Alex Hamill (6-0, 222, Jr.)
CB	32	Markus Dawes (6-0, 196, Sr.)
		Chima Nwachukwu* (5-10, 192, Fr.)
FS	23	Hasain Abdullah (6-1, 178, Sr.)
	26	Xavier Hicks (6-0, 196, So.)
SS	24	Christian Bass (6-2, 213, Sr.)
		Terry Mixon (6-1, 190, Jr.)
CB	36	B.T. Walker (6-1, 167, Sr.)
		Devin Giles (5-11, 170, So.)
P	8	Darryl Blunt (6-0, 184, Jr.)
PR	5	Michael Bumpus (6-0, 195, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Martin (artificial, 35,117). **Site:** Pullman, Wash.
Coach: Bill Doba (25-22, 4 years, 18 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Mike Levenseller (7th year, 16th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Bill Doba (1st year)

Last league title won: 2002 (tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 2003.

2006 record: 6-6, 4-5/T5th Pac-10

Returning leaders: Rushing—Dwight Tardy (145 att., 667 yards, 4 TDs). Passing—Alex Brink (241-396-10, 2,899 yards, 19 TDs). Receiving—Michael Bumpus (60 rec., 558 yards, 1 TD).



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The team is back to the 4-3 after injuries forced a shift to a 3-4 last season. If the rebuilt secondary can handle more man coverage—which the team plans to use more often in the pass-happy Pac-10—it would allow the defense to be more aggressive with its linebackers.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL If healthy, the front four can be as good as any in the league. That's a big if. Tackle Ropati Pitoitua is a mountain to move in the middle, and ends Lance Broadus and Matt Mullennix could be disruptive on the edge, though Mullennix (knee) is a question after missing last season. Greg Trent started all 12 games at linebacker last season, but the experience beyond

him is limited. Only savvy veteran free safety Husain Abdullah returns in the secondary, so transfers Devin Giles and Terry Mixon could play immediately. **SPECIAL TEAMS** Bumpus is one of the league's best punt returners, and he could return kicks, too. Darryl Blunt is back to handle punting duty, but the return of kickers Loren Langley and Romeen Abdolmohammadi doesn't inspire confidence; they missed six of 16 field-goal attempts last season. **COACHING STAFF** Bill Doba returned to his former defensive coordinator role after Robb Akey left to become head coach at Idaho, and Doba also will coach linebackers. That frees Leon Burnett to take over safeties and Ken Greene to coach corners. The secondary will need extra attention from coaches to succeed in playing more man coverage.

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at Wisconsin	
9-8	vs. San Diego State*	
9-15	Idaho	56-10
9-22	at USC	22-28
9-29	at Arizona	17-27
10-6	Arizona State	14-47
10-13	at Oregon	34-23
10-27	UCLA	37-15
11-3	at California	3-21
11-10	Stanford	36-10
11-17	at Oregon State	13-6
11-24	at Washington	34-23

*at Seattle

■ Toughest game • Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Pac-10 schedule strength: 6th



1 OT Vaughn Lesuma. The JC transfer's assignment will be to fill the one opening on the line and protect the QB. His transition to Division I-A wasn't helped when he had to miss spring drills recovering from wrist surgery.

2 SS Terry Mixon. The JC All-American should be one of three new starters in the secondary. The pressure is on Mixon because of the team's goal to play more man coverage this season, but his ability should measure up.

WASHINGTON HUSKIES

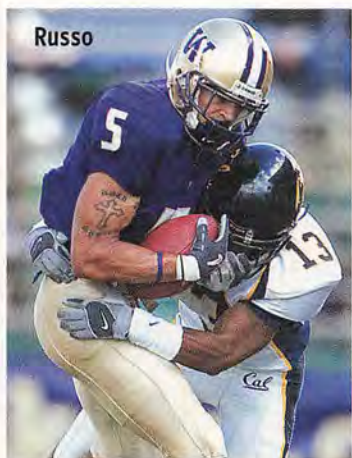
SN projection **9th, 4-8**National rank **85**

The Huskies should be better, but they'll have a tough time getting more than the five wins they posted last season because they're playing the conference's most difficult schedule. It'll take another solid recruiting class—or two—to put Washington back in the first division.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Coach Tyrone Willingham prefers a conservative attack, but a better passer throwing to better receivers might make it tempting to go deep more often and stretch defenses. That also would help the running game the Huskies rely on.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Highly touted recruits J.R. Hasty and Jake Locker finally might get their chance. Hasty, a tailback, hasn't played in a game since 2004, when he was a record-setting senior in high school. If he can't make the most of his big opportunity, the job proba-



ROBERT SEALE / SN ARCHIVES

bly will fall to inconsistent Louis Rankin, last year's leading rusher with 666 yards, or one of the freshmen arriving in August. Locker, a redshirt freshman, beat out Carl Bonnell for the quarterback job in the spring and will throw to a veteran group that includes Anthony Russo, Marcel Reece and Quintin Daniels. The key to the offense could be a line that returns three starters—tackles Chad Macklin and Ben Ossai and center Juan Garcia, the leader of the group. Both guard spots need to be filled. Casey Bulyca and Morgan Rosborough are big bodies and Jordan White-Frisbee can provide athleticism.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Huskies will be looking for more variety out of their standard 4-3. Injuries depleted their secondary and left them short on options last season. But more aggressive play, a stronger pass rush and better health could make life a lot easier for coordinator Kent Baer.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The

Quick hits

Stadium: Husky (artificial, 72,500). **Site:** Seattle.
Coach: Tyrone Willingham (7-16, 2 years; 72-67-1 overall, 12 years)

Offensive coordinator: Tim Lappano (3rd year)

Defensive coordinator: Kent Baer (3rd year)

Last league title won: 2000 (tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 2002.

2006 record: 5-7, 3-6/9th Pac-10

Returning leaders: Rushing—Louis Rankin (142 att., 666 yards, 4 TDs). Passing—Carl Bonnell (72-164-11, 916 yards, 7 TDs). Receiving—Anthony Russo (32 rec., 552 yards, 2 TDs).

front four should be solid. Daniel Te'o-Nesheim and Greyson Gunheim will man the end positions, with Wilson Afoa and Jordan Reffett reclaiming their starting jobs inside. Dan Howell and Donald Butler provide the nucleus of a rebuilt linebackers unit, and two solid starters return to the secondary—free safety Jason Wells and cornerback Roy Lewis.

SPECIAL TEAMS The Huskies spent the spring auditioning kickers and punters after both positions were depleted by

graduation. Ryan Perkins is a candidate to fill both jobs, but he will have to beat out freshman Eric Folk for kicking duties and junior college transfer Jared Ballman at punter.

COACHING STAFF Willingham hired longtime friend Charlie Baggett to tutor wide receivers, hoping that his decade of NFL experience will get the attention of an underachieving group. An increase in talent also is likely to make coordinators Tim Lappano and Baer look better.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	5	Anthony Russo (5-11, 185, Sr.)
	18	Corey Williams (6-2, 195, Sr.)
LT	79	Ben Ossai (6-6, 300, So.)
	69	Erik Berglund (6-6, 290, Sr.)
LG	70	Morgan Rosborough (6-6, 375, So.)
	76	Jordan White-Frisbee (6-6, 320, Jr.)
C	58	Juan Garcia (6-3, 315, Sr.)
	64	Matt Sedillo (6-3, 300, Fr.)
RG	72	Casey Bulyca (6-6, 320, Jr.)
	65	Ryan Tolar (6-6, 325, Fr.)
RT	75	Chad Macklin (6-8, 300, Sr.)
	71	Cody Habben (6-5, 270, Fr.)
TE	86	Michael Gottlieb (6-5, 245, Jr.)
	37	Johnnie Kirtan (6-3, 270, Jr.)
WR	3	Marcel Reece (6-3, 240, Sr.)
	29	Cody Ellis (6-0, 185, Sr.)
QB	10	Jake Locker (6-3, 210, Fr.)
	11	Carl Bonnell (6-3, 210, Sr.)
RB	9	Louis Rankin (6-1, 205, Sr.)
	24	J.R. Hasty (5-11, 210, So.)
FB	30	Paul Homer (6-0, 225, So.)
	32	Luke Kravitz (6-1, 225, Jr.)
K	13	Ryan Perkins (6-0, 185, So.)
KR	28	Roy Lewis (5-11, 187, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	66	Daniel Te'o-Nesheim (6-4, 245, So.)
	59	Darrion Jones (6-3, 245, Jr.)
T	95	Jordan Reffett (6-6, 295, Sr.)
	56	Jovon O'Connor (6-5, 290, Jr.)
T	74	Wilson Afoa (6-3, 290, Sr.)
	99	Cameron Elisara (6-2, 275, Fr.)
E	7	Greyson Gunheim (6-5, 265, Sr.)
	85	Caesar Rayford (6-7, 242, Sr.)
SLB	34	Dan Howell (6-1, 225, Sr.)
	36	Matt Houston (6-1, 215, Fr.)
MLB	35	Donald Butler (6-1, 240, So.)
	57	Trenton Tuiaosopo (6-2, 240, Jr.)
WLB	29	Chris Stevens (6-0, 215, Jr.)
	22	E.J. Savannah (6-2, 222, So.)
CB	16	Jordan Murchison (6-0, 184, Sr.)
	19	Matt Mosley (5-11, 190, Fr.)
FS	26	Jason Wells (6-2, 210, Jr.)
	27	Jay Angotti (5-10, 180, Fr.)
SS	23	Mesphin Forrester (6-2, 205, Jr.)
	15	Darin Harris (5-11, 200, Jr.)
CB	28	Roy Lewis (5-11, 187, Sr.)
	21	Desmond Davis (5-11, 190, Jr.)
P		Jared Ballman (5-11, 175, Jr.)
PR	5	Anthony Russo (5-11, 185, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
8-31	at Syracuse*	
9-8	Boise State	
9-15	Ohio State	
9-22	at UCLA	29-19
9-29	■ USC	20-26
10-13	at Arizona State	23-26, OT
10-20	▲ Oregon	14-34
10-27	Arizona	21-10
11-3	at Stanford	3-20
11-10	at Oregon State	17-27
11-17	California	24-31, OT
11-24	● Washington State	35-32
12-1	at Hawaii	

*Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Pac-10 schedule strength: 2nd

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Jake Locker. The Huskies resisted pulling his redshirt season, even when injuries knocked out three quarterbacks. The experience would have been beneficial because he needs to be the man from the opening snap.

2 CB Byron Davenport. Help is needed in the secondary, and this one-time UCLA defender could fill that role after spending last year at a junior college. He'll either take the open starting spot or contribute as a nickel back.

STANFORD CARDINAL

SN projection **10th, 1-11**

National rank **108**

**Quick
hits**

Stadium: Stanford (grass, 50,000). **Site:** Stanford, Calif.

Coach: Jim Harbaugh (1st year)

Offensive coordinator: David Shaw (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Scott Shafer (1st year)

Last league title won: 1999. **Last bowl appearance:** 2001.

2006 record: 1-11, 1-8/10th Pac-10

Returning leaders: Rushing—Anthony Kimble (114 att., 470 yards, 2 TDs). Passing—T.C. Ostrander (72-158-5, 918 yards, 3 TDs). Receiving—Richard Sherman (34 rec., 581 yards, 3 TDs).

Winning will take a while, so the first step for new coach Jim Harbaugh is to change the attitude at the school, which has had five straight losing seasons. He has the enthusiastic, hard-working personality to do it.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Harbaugh is implementing an uptempo, West Coast offense that should be as balanced as the personnel allows.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Harbaugh's experience as an NFL quarterback will help new full-time starter T.C. Ostrander. The fifth-year senior threw for 2,361 yards in 22 games as Trent Edwards' backup but is less mobile than Edwards. The line,

anchored by Alex Fletcher and Allen Smith, will get a boost if 2005 starter Tim Mattran can remain healthy and hold down the center position. The Cardinal returns 162 of its 167 receptions last season—and two of their best receivers, Evan Moore and Mark Bradford, accounted for only 24 of those because of injuries. The entire backfield returns, but it must improve. Anthony Kimble is a pass-catching threat who can run inside or outside. Toby Gerhart has matured. Emeka Nnoli is the incumbent fullback, but he will be pushed by Josh Catron and Sam Weinberger.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Stanford reverts to an attacking 4-3



Ostrander

RYAN GARDNER / AP

on the line are open competitions, too.

SPECIAL TEAMS At least Stanford might win a few field position battles. Jay Ottovogio is one of the Pac-10's better punters. Kicker David Green is the Cardinal's top incoming recruit, and he will push Aaron Zagory, who was capable in his first year as a starter. The team must develop punt returners, not just fair-catch recipients.

COACHING STAFF Harbaugh, 43, is the oldest member of the revamped staff, and there's plenty of enthusiasm to match the youth. The group includes people familiar with Harbaugh and the school. Three of his assistants at San Diego and two former Stanford players are among the coaches.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	4	Mark Bradford (6-2, 210, Sr.)
	25	Stephen Carr (6-3, 215, Fr.)
LT	67	Allen Smith (6-4, 300, Jr.)
	68	Bobby Ducker (6-5, 290, Jr.)
LG	72	Mikal Brewer (6-3, 300, Sr.)
	65	Gustav Rystedt (6-3, 300, Jr.)
C	62	Tim Mattran (6-5, 300, Sr.)
	70	Bert McBride (6-3, 290, Fr.)
RG	60	Alex Fletcher (6-3, 300, Jr.)
	71	Andrew Phillips (6-5, 290, Fr.)
RT	76	Ben Muth (6-6, 295, Jr.)
	63	Chris Marinelli (6-7, 305, So.)
TE	83	Jim Dray (6-5, 240, So.)
	84	Austin Gunder (6-5, 245, Jr.)
WR	8	Evan Moore (6-7, 235, Sr.)
	9	Richard Sherman (6-3, 185, So.)
QB	13	T.C. Ostrander (6-3, 215, Sr.)
	15	Alex Loukas (6-4, 205, Fr.)
RB	26	Anthony Kimble (6-1, 200, Jr.)
	33	Jason Evans (6-1, 190, Sr.)
FB	32	Emeka Nnoli (6-1, 235, Sr.)
	39	Sam Weinberger (6-2, 230, Fr.)
K	12	Derek Belch (5-11, 195, Sr.)
KR	31	Tyrone McGraw (5-9, 173, Fr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	90	Udem Udofia (6-4, 240, Sr.)
	97	Emmanuel Awofadeju (6-4, 240, Sr.)
T	99	Levirt Griffin (6-4, 255, So.)
	96	Derek Hall (6-5, 252, Fr.)
NT	95	Chris Horn (6-5, 270, Sr.)
	54	Ekem Udofia (6-2, 310, So.)
E	91	Pannel Egboh (6-6, 280, Jr.)
	80	Erik Lorig (6-4, 250, So.)
OLB	20	Clinton Snyder (6-4, 230, So.)
	50	Nick Macaluso (6-3, 225, Fr.)
MLB	44	Pat Maynor (6-2, 215, Jr.)
	41	Tom McAndrew (6-5, 270, So.)
OLB	28	Peter Griffin (6-1, 215, Sr.)
	51	Fred Campbell (6-1, 225, So.)
CB	2	Nick Sanchez (6-0, 190, Sr.)
	49	Tyler Porras (6-2, 175, Fr.)
FS	38	Austin Yancy (6-4, 195, So.)
	17	Carlos McFall (5-11, 200, Jr.)
SS	22	Bo McNally (6-0, 205, So.)
	21	Thaddeus Chase (6-0, 200, Jr.)
CB	31	Wopamo Osaisai (5-11, 200, Jr.)
	14	Tim Sims (5-11, 190, Sr.)
P	27	Jay Ottovogio (6-0, 195, Sr.)
PR	36	Chris Hobbs (5-9, 170, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

after going with a personnel-driven 3-4 last season.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The Cardinal lost all-league linebacker Michael Okwo and two starting safeties. But it has active Clinton Snyder, who impressed on the outside last season, and supersized Tom McAndrew, who moves from the line to middle linebacker. Brian Bulcke, Fred Campbell and Will Powers also have starting experience and add depth to the linebacking unit. Active playmaker Wopamo Osaisai excelled at cornerback late last season, but both safety positions are up in the air. Converted receiver Austin Yancy and hard-nosed Bo McNally are the top candidates to start. Powerful tackle Ekem Udofia is the front-runner to start at tackle, but he has to beat out Derek Hall and James McGillicuddy. The other spots

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	UCLA	0-31
9-15	San Jose State	34-35
9-22	Oregon	10-48
9-29	Arizona State	3-38
10-6	at USC	0-42
10-13	TCU	
10-20	at Arizona	7-20
10-27	at Oregon State	7-30
11-3	Washington	20-3
11-10	at Washington State	10-36
11-24	Notre Dame	10-31
12-1	California	17-26

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Pac-10 schedule strength: 3rd

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 **WR Mark Bradford.** Stanford's ability to move the chains depends on how well Bradford returns from a foot injury suffered in the second game last season. He has good speed and hands.

2 **FS Austin Yancy.** With its top three safeties gone from last year, Stanford moved Yancy over from receiver to help out. He appears physical and athletic enough to handle the position change.

BIG EAST

National aspirations soar as depth improves

The 2006 season will be remembered as a good one for the Big East, but the conference, from top to bottom, should be even better in 2007.

The top three teams—Louisville, West Virginia and Rutgers—are loaded with speed and skill-position talent. And given that all three have manageable schedules, there's reason to think that a conference team can produce an undefeated record and earn a berth in the BCS national championship game.

Recent criticism has focused on the conference's lack of depth, but the Big East posted a 37-8 record in nonconference action last year (14-7 against other BCS conferences), and the lower-level teams are getting stronger.

which is building around sophomore running back Donald Brown, could make serious noise, as could a Syracuse team that made solid strides last season and figures to continue its rise in the third year of Greg Robinson's rebuilding program.

Grothe is a big reason USF suddenly is a player in the Big East.



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

South Florida, coming off a 9-4 season and a bowl victory, now boasts an exciting young quarterback in Matt Grothe, the conference's rookie of the year. Grothe will be complemented by outstanding speed on both sides of the ball.

Cincinnati, which entered last season in a rebuilding mode, surprised everyone by posting eight victories. And the Bearcats are loaded with returning starters and lettermen.

Pitt lost its three biggest stars, but the Panthers have a wealth of young talent. They are deeper at many positions—particularly on both lines—than they have been in years.

Even Connecticut,

Projected finish

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

ASCENDING ^

South Florida. The Bulls have had talent on both sides of the ball in recent years but lacked consistency at quarterback. That changed last year with the emergence of Matt Grothe, who led the team to a 9-4 record and the school's first bowl victory. Grothe and 15 other returning starters should help the Bulls contend for a conference title.

DESCENDING v

Connecticut. The Huskies looked like a rising star when they won the Motor City Bowl in 2004, their first Big East season. But two consecutive losing records and 11 losses in their last 14 conference games have removed the luster. And things don't figure to improve anytime soon thanks to three sub-par recruiting classes and quarterback issues.



Honor roll

Best pregame atmosphere: Louisville
Best home-field advantage: West Virginia
Best stadium: Rentschler Field, Connecticut
Best fans: West Virginia
Best mascot: The Mountaineer, West Virginia
Strongest arm: Brian Brohm, Louisville
Most dangerous scrambler: Patrick White, West Virginia
Fastest running back: Steve Slaton, West Virginia
Most physical receiver: Derek Kinder, Pitt
Surest hands: Harry Douglas, Louisville
Most dominant O-lineman: Jeremy Zuttah, Rutgers
Most disruptive end: Peanut Whitehead, Louisville
Best run-stuffing tackle: Eric Foster, Rutgers
Hardest-hitting linebacker: Malik Jackson, Louisville
Best cover man: Trae Williams, South Florida
Top NFL prospect: Brian Brohm, QB, Louisville

Players returning from injuries

Steve Slaton, RB, West Virginia. Recovered from surgery to correct a wrist injury that slowed him late last season, Slaton will garner serious Heisman attention.

Eric Thatcher, FS, Pitt. After his outstanding 2006 season was cut short by a broken ankle, a healthy Thatcher should provide a major upgrade in Pitt's secondary.

Cody Brown, DE, Connecticut. Despite playing only six games last season because of a broken arm, Brown recorded 4½ sacks and 7½ tackles for loss. He has what it takes to become an all-conference performer.

Jamaal Westerman, DE, Rutgers. One of the cornerstones for another nasty Scarlet Knights defense, he spent his spring recovering from shoulder surgery.

Players who must step up

Bill Stull, QB, Pitt. He played in only four games behind Tyler Palko last season and now must separate himself from freshman quarterback wannabes Kevan Smith and Pat Bostick.

Kevin Brock, TE, Rutgers. Clark Harris, an all-conference performer and the Scarlet Knights' second-leading receiver last year, is gone. Brock will have to fill a void.

Aaron Berry, CB, Pitt. The defense struggled last season, but how bad would it have been if half the field wasn't locked down by superb corner Darrelle Revis, who declared early for the NFL draft? Berry isn't as big or physical as Revis, but he might have better cover skills.

Adrian Grady, NT, Louisville. The Cardinals need a run-stopper to replace Amobi Okoye, and Grady appears to be the front-runner for that job. He appeared in eight games last year and started two.



SHELLEY FELLER / LOUISVILLE ATHLETICS

All-conference

FIRST TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Mario Urrutia, Louisville (6-6, 228, Jr.)
WR	Harry Douglas, Louisville (5-11, 170, Sr.)
TE	Gary Barnidge, Louisville (6-6, 234, Sr.)
T	Jeremy Zuttah, Rutgers (6-4, 290, Sr.)
T	George Bussey, Louisville (6-4, 298, Jr.)
G	Trevor Canfield, Cincinnati (6-5, 318, Jr.)
G	Mike Fladell, Rutgers (6-8, 325, Sr.)
C	Eric Wood, Louisville (6-4, 301, Jr.)
QB	Brian Brohm, Louisville (6-4, 226, Sr.)
RB	Steve Slaton, West Virginia (5-10, 190, Jr.)
RB	Ray Rice, Rutgers (5-9, 200, Jr.)

Defense

E	Joe Clemond, Pitt (6-3, 260, Sr.)
E	Keilen Dykes, West Virginia (6-5, 295, Sr.)
T	Terrill Byrd, Cincinnati (6-1, 270, Jr.)
T	Eric Foster, Rutgers (6-2, 265, Sr.)
LB	Malik Jackson, Louisville (6-2, 231, Sr.)
LB	Danny Linsanah, Connecticut (6-0, 248, Sr.)
LB	Corey Smith, Cincinnati (6-1, 208, Jr.)
CB	Trae Williams, South Florida (5-10, 185, Sr.)
CB	Mike Mickens, Cincinnati (6-0, 166, Jr.)
S	Courtney Greene, Rutgers (6-1, 205, Jr.)
S	Eric Thatcher, Pitt (5-9, 190, Jr.)

Specialists

K	Art Carmody, Louisville (5-9, 165, Sr.)
P	Justin Teachey, South Florida (5-11, 170, Jr.)
KR	Lowell Robinson, Pitt (6-0, 195, Sr.)
SN All-American	

Players of the year

Offense: Steve Slaton, RB, West Virginia
Defense: Eric Foster, T, Rutgers

SECOND TEAM Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Derek Kinder, Pitt (6-1, 205, Sr.)
WR	Darius Reynaud, West Virginia (5-10, 200, Sr.)
TE	Darrell Strong, Pitt (6-5, 260, Sr.)
T	Pedro Sosa, Rutgers (6-5, 290, Sr.)
T	Ryan Stanchek, West Virginia (6-4, 300, Jr.)
G	C.J. Davis, Pitt (6-2, 300, Jr.)
G	Carroll Madison, Syracuse (6-2, 310, Sr.)
C	Nick Capogna, South Florida (6-3, 275, Jr.)
QB	Patrick White, West Virginia (6-2, 185, Jr.)
RB	Donald Brown, Connecticut (5-11, 214, So.)
RB	Curtis Brinkley, Syracuse (5-9, 203, Jr.)

Defense

E	Jamaal Westerman, Rutgers (6-3, 250, Jr.)
E	Jameel McClain, Syracuse (6-1, 256, Sr.)
T	Adrian Grady, Louisville (6-2, 292, Jr.)
T	Tony Jenkins, Syracuse (6-3, 286, Sr.)
LB	Leo Morgan, Cincinnati (6-1, 204, Sr.)
LB	Tyrone McKenzie, South Florida (6-2, 230, Jr.)
LB	Ben Moffitt, South Florida (6-2, 240, Sr.)
CB	Mike Jenkins, South Florida (6-0, 200, Sr.)
CB	DeAngelo Smith, Cincinnati (6-0, 186, Jr.)
S	Ron Girault, Rutgers (5-11, 200, Sr.)
S	Dowayne Davis, Syracuse (6-0, 200, Sr.)

Specialists

K	Jeremy Ito, Rutgers (5-11, 190, Sr.)
P	Dave Brytus, Pitt (6-4, 225, Jr.)
KR	Vaughn Rivers, West Virginia (5-9, 170, Sr.)

Newcomers of the year

Offense: LeSean McCoy, RB, Pitt
Defense: Pat Lazear, LB, West Virginia

Newcomers to watch

Pat Lazear, LB, West Virginia. Lazear, one of the highest-rated recruits in the Big East, plays a position of need for the Mountaineers. He could be a nice fit.

LeSean McCoy, RB, Pitt. McCoy, one of the nation's top-rated running backs in the 2006 class, went

to prep school because of academic issues and an injury. It's possible he could be the Panthers' starting running back by the time the season rolls around.

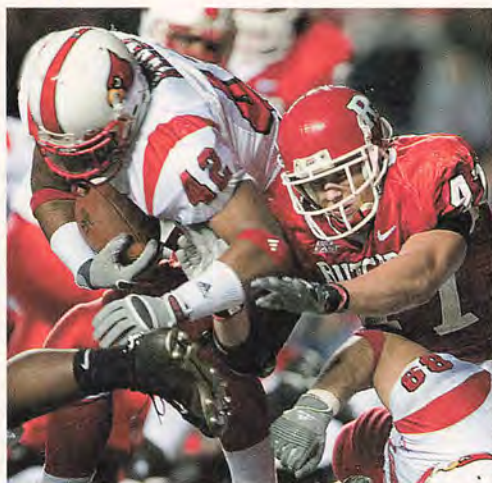
Tommie Duhart, DT/DE, Pitt. This junior college transfer will step right in and play end or tackle.

Dave Wannstedt hopes he will significantly bolster an anemic run defense.

Anthony Davis, OL, Rutgers. The massive Davis (6-6, 350) was rated as one of the best lineman recruits in the country. He should fit in well at Rutgers, which

already boasts one of the best offensive lines in the Big East.

Woodny Turenne, CB, Louisville. Turenne, a cover corner, was rated among the top five junior college prospects in the country. He will figure immediately into the Cardinals' pass defense plans.



DREW HALLOWELL FOR SN

Gotta-see games

> West Virginia at Marshall, Sept. 8

Nothing promotes pride more than an early season game between two bitter in-state rivals. The game is at Marshall which means tickets will be scarce and intensity high.

> South Florida at Auburn, Sept. 8

The Bulls have lofty expectations, and this is a chance to make a statement for the conference as well as the program.

> West Virginia at Maryland, Sept. 13

After losing his first three games against Maryland, Rich Rodriguez has turned the tables with three straight wins.

> Navy at Pitt, Oct. 10

Navy averaged 327 rushing yards per game last season. Pitt gave up 181.2. This could be a long night for the Panthers.

> West Virginia at Rutgers, Oct. 27

These two teams produced one of the most exciting games of last season—a 41-39 three-overtime thriller.

> Louisville at West Virginia, Nov. 8

Fans who like offense will enjoy this one—the last two games between these title hopefuls have produced 168 points.

> Louisville at South Florida, Nov. 17

The last time Louisville traveled to Tampa, the Cardinals were humbled by the Bulls, who are looking to break into the Big East's penthouse. A win here would put them there.

> Rutgers at Louisville, Nov. 29

A late field goal by Rutgers kicker Jeremy Ito is all that stood between the Cardinals and an undefeated 2006 season.

> Pitt at West Virginia, Dec. 1

The Backyard Brawl has been more like the Backyard Maul in recent years. The Panthers have been powerless to stop the Mountaineers' rushing attack.

> Dream schedule Rutgers. The Scarlet Knights have eight home games, including the first five games of the year. The non-conference schedule—Buffalo, Navy, Norfolk State, Army—is comical. Rutgers does play Maryland, but the game is in Piscataway. The Scarlet Knights' only tough road game will be against Louisville in the final week of the season.

> Nightmare schedule Pitt. Calling the Panthers' schedule the toughest in the Big East is really an indictment of the collective weak nonconference schedule of the other league members. Still, Pitt has a brutal road slate with trips to Michigan State, Virginia, Louisville, Rutgers and West Virginia. Of the conference contenders, only rising South Florida will play at Heinz Field.

> Bowl bound West Virginia, Louisville and Rutgers will be in the hunt for a BCS berth with South Florida possibly slipping into contention with a few good breaks. Those four teams almost certainly will be playing a postseason game somewhere with two other Big East teams, most likely Pitt and Cincinnati, filling out the conference bowl alignment.

Guys who change game plans

Patrick White, QB, West Virginia. White was hard enough to stop two seasons ago when he was the country's best scrambler and fastest QB. Last year, he showed he could beat teams with his arm, too.

Mario Urrutia, WR, Louisville. Urrutia is a defensive coordinator's worst nightmare—a fast receiver with great hands who also happens to be 6-6.

Ray Rice, RB, Rutgers. Even though teams lined up to stop the Scarlet Knights' running game every week, Rice still finished last season as the nation's second-leading rusher. He is the perfect combination of power and speed; he can run over or around tacklers.

Donald Brown, RB, Connecticut. Brown claimed the starting job when Terry Caulley, the school's all-time leading rusher, went down with an injury. But he remained the starter after Caulley returned and became the only freshman to make the all-conference team.

Matt Grothe, QB, South Florida. Grothe, a dual threat, is gritty, resourceful and tough. He has that special ability to make big plays out of nothing.

Guys who make game plans

ON THE HOT SEAT: Dave Wannstedt, Pitt. Wannstedt edges Syracuse's Greg Robinson because the Orange at least improved their win total in 2006. But both coaches are entering their third seasons and need to get their programs back to speed. Wannstedt has recruited well but needs to convert those top 20 classes into victories.

BEST COACH: Rich Rodriguez, West Virginia.

The Mountaineers' innovative spread offense is only a small part of why Rodriguez has been so successful. He is a master motivator and makes great adjustments during games. His teams are always well prepared and almost always outwork opponents. He's the master of finding diamonds in the rough and transforming them into superstars.

BEST OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt

Cavanaugh, Pitt. Cavanaugh, generally considered a run-first coach, showed his versatility last year when he built his game plans around quarterback Tyler Palko and found ways to keep Palko on his feet despite some holes along the line. Despite shortcomings in personnel, the Panthers averaged 31.8 points and 372.2 yards per game.

BEST DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Schi-

ano, Rutgers. Head coach Schiano's seat was getting warm after a disappointing 2004, so he made some staff changes—and personally took over the defense. Since then, the Scarlet Knights have won 18 of 25 games and played in two straight bowls. Their nationally ranked defense led the way both seasons.

RIISING STAR: Mike Cassity, Louisville defensive coordinator. Everyone talks about the Cardinals' offense, but the defense has been pretty salty of late. Credit Cassity for creating looks and aggressive schemes that confound offenses and maximize the team's abundant athletic ability.

BEST STAFF: Rutgers. The Scarlet Knights play old-school, smash-mouth football and aren't always the most fun team to watch. One of their secrets to success is fundamentals—they do all the little things well and never beat themselves, which is a credit to Schiano and his staff.



BOB LEVERONE / SN

UNIT
rankings

	Backfield	Receivers	Offensive line	Overall	Defensive line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
Cincinnati	7	7	6	6	4	5	4	5	7	6
Connecticut	6	8	8	8	8	6	7	7	6	7
Louisville	3	1	2	1	2	3	6	3	1	3
Pitt	5	2	5	5	6	8	3	6	5	5
Rutgers	2	4	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	1
South Florida	4	3	4	4	3	1	5	2	4	4
Syracuse	8	6	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8
West Virginia	1	5	3	3	5	4	2	4	2	2

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

Returning leaders

RUSHING Player, school, class	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.		
1. Ray Rice, Rutgers, Jr.	13	335	1,794	5.4	63	20	138.0	2		
2. Steve Slaton, West Virginia, Jr.	13	248	1,744	7.0	65	16	134.2	3		
3. Patrick White, West Virginia, Jr.	12	165	1,219	7.4	69	18	101.6	22		
4. Donald Brown, Connecticut, So.	12	161	896	5.6	65	7	74.7	50		
5. LaRod Stephens-Howling, Pitt, Jr.	11	178	893	5.0	70	9	81.2	t51		
PASSING Player, school, class	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1. Brian Brohm, Louisville, Sr.	11	199	313	63.6	5	3,049	15.3	16	159.1	14
2. Matt Grothe, South Florida, So.	13	202	317	63.7	14	2,576	12.8	15	138.8	34
3. Mike Teel, Rutgers, Jr.	13	164	296	55.4	13	2,135	13.0	12	120.6	61
4. Patrick White, West Virginia, Jr.	12	118	179	65.9	7	1,655	14.0	13	159.7	t81
5. Dustin Grutza, Cincinnati, Jr.	12	137	225	60.9	13	1,632	11.9	9	123.5	83
RECEIVING Player, school, class	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.	
1. Harry Douglas, Louisville, Sr.	13	70	1,265	75	6	5.4	18.1	97.3	t23	
2. Mario Urrutia, Louisville, Jr.	13	58	973	68	6	4.5	16.8	74.8	t51	
3. Derek Kinder, Pitt, Sr.	12	57	847	80	6	4.8	14.9	70.6	t58	
4. Oderick Turner, Pitt, So.	12	44	660	72	8	3.7	15.0	55.0	—	
5. Dominick Goodman, Cincinnati, Jr.	13	40	452	31	5	3.1	11.3	34.8	—	



WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

The WVU backfield, ranked No. 1 in the Big East and the nation: Owen Schmitt (front), Patrick White (left) and Steve Slaton.

Recruiting buzz

Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact	Diamond in the rough
1. Pitt	QB Pat Bostick, 6-3/220	DT Tommie Duhart, 6-2/275	OL John Fieger, 6-5/274
2. West Virginia	RB Noel Devine, 5-8/175	LB Pat Lazear, 6-0/229	ATH Brandon Hogan, 5-11/160
3. Rutgers	OT Anthony Davis, 6-5/341	ATH Mason Robinson, 5-9/180	LB Jourdan Brooks, 6-1/247
4. Louisville	CB Woody Turenne, 6-2/190	LB Willie Williams, 6-3/232	TE Sam Gardner, 6-5/255
5. Syracuse	LB Jermaine Pierce, 6-3/230	DB Ryan Gilm, 5-11/205	DB Chaz Cervino, 5-10/175
6. South Florida	RB Mike Ford, 6-2/210	DT Terrell McClain, 6-2/264	ATH Joshua Bellamy, 6-0/181
7. Connecticut	LB Jarrell Miller, 6-3/225	QB Tyler Lorenzen, 6-5/225	LB Kendall Reyes, 6-4/220
8. Cincinnati	QB Chazz Anderson, 6-1/197	WR O.J. Woodard, 6-4/205	DE Randy Martinez, 6-0/231

Rankings by Rivals.com

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
Louisville	12-1*	9-3^	11-1	9-4	7-6	48-15
West Virginia	11-2	11-1*	8-4*	8-5*	9-4	47-16
Pitt	6-6	5-6	8-4*	8-5	9-4	36-25
South Florida	9-4	6-6^	4-7	7-4	9-2	35-23
Connecticut	4-8	5-6	8-4^	9-3	6-6	32-27
Cincinnati	8-5	4-7^	7-5	5-7	7-7	31-31
Rutgers	11-2	7-5	4-7	5-7	1-11	28-32
Syracuse	4-8	1-10	6-6*	6-6	4-8	21-38

*Conference champ ^Jointed conference

MOUNTAINEERS

For the third consecutive season, West Virginia has the talent—and the schedule—to win the Big East, finish undefeated and qualify for the national championship game. Defensive issues, particularly against the pass, have caused the Mountaineers to stub their toes in recent pursuits of those goals, but coaches believe they have addressed the problem and now are capable of finishing the job.

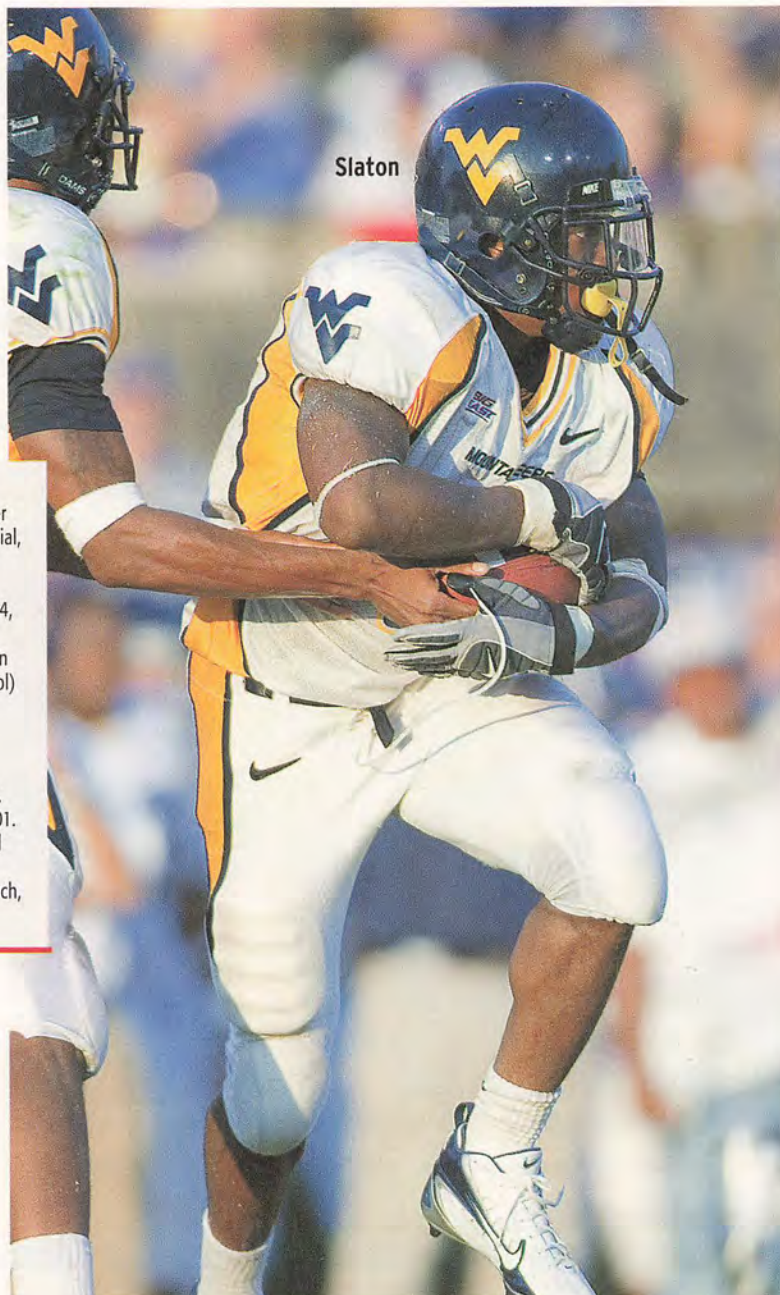
Trips to Maryland, South Florida and Rutgers will prove tricky, and a November game against a Louisville team that scored 88 points against WVU the past two seasons combined could have major ramifications. If the Mountaineers survive those four games, there's no reason to believe a trip to New Orleans for the BCS title game won't be on their itinerary.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Rich Rodriguez is one of the original spread offense gurus, but the Mountaineers use the formation to create mismatches for their running game, not their passing game. Rodriguez loves those dual-threat, athletic quarterbacks and is perfectly content to call a majority of read-option plays and pound opponents on the ground.

SKILL POSITIONS Quarterback Patrick White, the conference's offensive player of the year, already was considered one of the best running quarterbacks in the country. Now he's a dangerous passer, too. White totaled 2,874 yards running and passing last season and accounted for 31 touchdowns (18 rushing). If he continues to make strides throwing the ball, he will be virtually unstoppable.

As if White doesn't pose enough problems for



Slaton

Quick hits

Stadium: Mountaineer Field (artificial, 60,000)

Site: Morgantown, W.Va.

Coach: Rich Rodriguez (50-24, 6 years, 8 at school)

Offensive coordinator: Calvin Magee (4th year, 7th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Jeff Casteel (6th year, 7th at school)

Last league title won: 2005.

Last year not in a bowl: 2001.

2006 record: 11-2, 5-2/T2nd Big East

Gator Bowl: Beat Georgia Tech, 38-35

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 C Mike Dent. He toiled the past two seasons behind All-American Dan Mozes. Dent fits nicely in the Mountaineers' zone-blocking schemes because, despite being 285 pounds, he has quick feet and great athleticism.

2 FS Quinton Andrews. He led the team in tackles last season—as a true freshman. Andrews did that while playing mostly on talent and instincts. Now, with a full season under his belt, he could become a dominant player.

A Big East coach says ...

QB **Patrick White** can outrun you to the house. You can see that he's disciplined. They don't ask him to make a ton of throws, but the throws he has to make, he makes them on a dime. ... RB **Steve Slaton** will stay on his track after taking the handoff and stay in the backfield longer than other backs will. He'll run from one hashmark to the other and then turn it and go. You have to pursue him. ... They run the same defense they always have, that 3-3 stack with three deep. You have to handle the pressure they put on you.

defenses, tailback Steve Slaton is hearing Heisman whispers after rushing for a team-record 1,744 yards and 16 touchdowns last year. Receivers traditionally have been known for their blocking in Morgantown, but 6-8 Wes Lyons and Darius Reynaud have developed into dependable pass-catching options.

OFFENSIVE LINE Three starters return, including all-conference tackle Ryan Stanchek and guard Greg Isdamer, a freshman All-American last year. Tackle Jake Figner also should reclaim a starting job and, center Mike Dent and guard Eric Rodemoyer enjoyed excellent springs. The Mountaineers, primarily a zone-blocking team, will mix in a few man-blocking schemes.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Mountaineers use a 3-3-5 stack formation that enables them to pressure the quarterback as well as drop into coverage without changing their formations. Although the defense is undersized, running teams don't often have success because of all the athletes who fly to the ball.

FRONT SEVEN The Mountaineers have experience but must fill the significant shoes of linebackers Boo McLee and Jay Henry. Heralded freshman Pat Lazear could step into one of those spots, and there are a number of other options, starting with Bobby Hathaway, Marc Magro and Reed Williams. A potentially dominant front wall is built around all-conference tackle Keilen Dykes, tackle Johnny Dingle and end James Ingram. Coaches worked hard

in the spring to get the front six to become more active because the pass rush was nonexistent at times last season. If the linebackers are productive, the Mountaineers could have big success.

SECONDARY The secondary is loaded with athletes, but their play must improve if the Mountaineers are serious about winning a national title. WVU allowed 243 passing yards per game and 17 passing touchdowns last season. The leaders of this unit are the safeties—Eric Wicks, an all-conference selection and potential All-American, Ridwan Malik and Quinton Andrews. Cornerbacks Antonio Lewis and Vaughn Rivers are returning starters.

SPECIAL TEAMS Rivers is a big return weapon on punts and kickoffs. Pat McAfee was perfect on 62 extra point kicks and made 17-of-22 field-goal attempts. McAfee also shares punting duties with Scott Kozlowski. Neither has a big leg, but they seldom give up big returns because they kick the ball well directionally.

COACHING STAFF Rick Trickett, widely considered to be one of the top offensive line coaches in the country, bolted for Florida State, so the pressure is on replacement Greg Frey to continue the team's recent run of dominant offensive fronts. Frey is one of three new coaches. He comes from South Florida, as does new quarterbacks coach Rod Smith. With Rodriguez calling plays, the coach on the hot seat could be defensive coordinator Jeff Casteel if that unit fails to show improvement.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Steve Slaton	248	1,744	7.0	16	
Patrick White	165	1,219	7.4	18	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Patrick White	118-179-7	1,655		13	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Darius Reynaud	39	520	13.3	2	
Steve Slaton	27	360	13.3	2	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Darius Reynaud	30	813	27.1	1	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Pat McAfee	62	62	17	22	113
Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Quinton Andrews	46	34	80	0.5/0	
Eric Wicks	45	28	73	11/50	
Reed Williams	27	30	57	5.5/25	
Sacks: Wicks (7)					
Interceptions: Andrews (5)					

Sacks: Wicks (7)

Interceptions: Andrews (5)



Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Western Michigan		1-0
9-8	at Marshall	42-10	5-0
9-13	at Maryland*	45-24	3-2
9-22	East Carolina	27-10	5-0
9-28	▲ at South Florida^	19-24	1-1
10-6	at Syracuse	41-17	5-0
10-20	Mississippi State	42-14	1-0
10-27	■ at Rutgers	41-39, 3OT	5-0
11-8	● Louisville*	34-44	3-2
11-17	at Cincinnati	42-24	4-1
11-24	Connecticut	37-11	3-0
12-1	Pitt	45-27	4-1

*Thursday ^Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

Big East schedule strength: 2nd

>The Series Pitt (37-59-3): The Mountaineers have won 11 of the last 15 Backyard Brawls. Given the fact the Panthers remain in rebuilding form, West Virginia should continue its dominance.

>The Showdown vs. Louisville: What figures to be on the line? Only the Big East title. The Heisman also could be decided, with Brian Brohm and Patrick White facing off in the year's best QB matchup.

>The Smack Aim high. The Mountaineers want their Big East throne back. It'll be difficult. The early trip to Maryland will be a good test. If West Virginia survives a visit to South Florida—a big if—all eyes will be on back-to-back games at Rutgers and at home against Louisville.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	83	Tito Gonzales (6-2, 210, Jr.)
	4	Wes Lyons (6-8, 220, So.)
LT	62	Ryan Stanchek (6-4, 300, Jr.)
	84	Selvish Capers (6-6, 285, Jr.)
LG	79	Greg Isdamer (6-4, 315, So.)
	72	John Bradshaw (6-6, 290, Jr.)
C	68	Mike Dent (6-4, 285, Jr.)
	61	Eric Jobe (6-4, 300, Fr.)
RG	70	Eric Rodemoyer (6-4, 300, Fr.)
	60	Tim Reed (6-3, 285, So.)
RT	73	Jake Figner (6-5, 305, Jr.)
	67	Jon Walko (6-7, 280, So.)
TE	88	Michael Villagrana (6-4, 260, Sr.)
	86	Sam Morrone (6-2, 250, Jr.)
WR	2	Darius Reynaud (5-10, 200, Sr.)
	21	Dorrell Jalloh (6-0, 195, Jr.)
QB	5	Patrick White (6-2, 185, Jr.)
	16	Jarrett Brown (6-4, 220, So.)
RB	10	Steve Slaton (5-10, 190, Jr.)
	32	Ed Collington (6-0, 205, Jr.)
FB	35	Owen Schmitt (6-3, 260, Sr.)
	33	Maxwell Anderson (6-1, 240, So.)
K	40	Pat McAfee (6-1, 220, Jr.)
KR	2	Darius Reynaud (5-10, 200, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	92	Johnny Dingle (6-3, 270, Sr.)
	95	James Ingram (6-2, 265, So.)
NT	99	Thor Mellow (6-1, 240, So.)
	59	Chris Neild (6-3, 305, Fr.)
T	96	Keilen Dykes (6-5, 295, Sr.)
	93	Scotter Berry (6-2, 285, Fr.)
SLB	53	Marc Magro (6-3, 240, Sr.)
	1	John Holmes (6-3, 230, Jr.)
MLB	47	Reed Williams (6-2, 225, Jr.)
	55	Bobby Hathaway (6-1, 230, Sr.)
WLB	30	J.T. Thomas (6-2, 220, Fr.)
	49	Ovid Goulbourne (6-1, 215, So.)
CB	6	Antonio Lewis (5-10, 185, Sr.)
	3	Larry Williams (6-1, 190, Sr.)
FS	41	Eric Wicks (6-1, 205, Sr.)
	8	Quinton Andrews (6-0, 210, So.)
BS	20	Boogie Allen (6-2, 195, So.)
	21	Justin Blankenship (6-2, 190, Fr.)
SS	22	Ridwan Malik (6-1, 205, Sr.)
	15	Charles Pugh (6-0, 200, Jr.)
CB	19	Vaughn Rivers (5-9, 170, Sr.)
	3	Larry Williams (6-1, 190, Sr.)
P	40	Pat McAfee (6-1, 220, Jr.)
PR	19	Vaughn Rivers (5-9, 170, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

CARDINALS

A new coaching staff takes over at Louisville, but that doesn't spell relief for the rest of the conference. The defending champs return plenty of talent, and anything less than another 10-win season and second straight title will be a disappointment. The Cardinals probably won't even be challenged in their first nine games. But to repeat as champs, they'll have to navigate through a brutal season-ending stretch that includes trips to West Virginia and South Florida and a home game against Rutgers.

The Cardinals have some rebuilding to do on defense, but the offense should rank among the best in the nation. Senior quarterback Brian Brohm returns, as do his favorite targets, Harry Douglas and Mario Urrutia.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY One thing is not going to change under Steve Kragthorpe, an offensive-minded coach whose teams pile up passing yards and points. The offense will spread things out with multiple sets built around Brohm and his receivers. But it also will utilize a talented stable of running backs. The Cardinals averaged a whopping 475 yards and 37.8 points per game last year, but don't be surprised if they increase both numbers.

SKILL POSITIONS Brohm, who could have been a high NFL



DREW HOLLOWELL FOR SN

draft pick, chose to return and instead will be a Heisman Trophy contender. The MVP in the Orange Bowl, Brohm threw for 3,049 yards and 16 touchdowns last year and completed 63.6 percent of his passes.

The Cardinals still are

Quick hits

Stadium: Papa John's Cardinal (artificial, 42,000)

Site: Louisville, Ky.

Coach: Steve Kragthorpe (1st year; 29-22 overall, 4 years)

Offensive coordinator: Charlie Stubbs (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Mike Cassity (4th year)

Last league title won: 2006. **Last year not in a bowl:** 1997.

2006 record: 12-1, 6-1/1st Big East

Orange Bowl: Beat Wake Forest, 24-13

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 T Breno Giacomini. At 6-7 and 300 pounds, Giacomini looks the part of a dominant lineman. He also has active feet and is one of the team's better athletes. The converted tight end is likely to win the right tackle job.

2 DE Peanut Whitehead. The 6-6 sophomore, one of the highest rated recruits ever signed by Louisville, made an impact as a freshman. Coaches expect him to blossom into one of the conference's top pass rushers.

A Big East coach says ...

QB **Brian Brohm** is a good decision maker. It will be interesting to see how he does in the new system. ... WR **Mario Urrutia** can get jammed up at the line. He's not a great receiver. He has height but no speed. He doesn't scare you. The best receiver on that team is **Harry Douglas**. He has speed. ... Their offensive line is not physical. Last year, they weren't very good up front at all. ... Their defense is aggressive, and they'll continue to blitz a lot because (coordinator) **Mike Cassity** is still there. They're quick, and they have real good athletes.

searching for a feature back but have experience in George Stripling and Anthony Allen as well as two highly recruited freshmen. A strong argument can be made that the Cardinals' receiving corps, led by Douglas and Urrutia, is the best in the nation. Douglas and Urrutia combined to catch 128 passes for 2,238 yards and 12 touchdowns last season. And there is depth at this position, too.

OFFENSIVE LINE All-conference center Eric Wood anchors what might be the best line in the Big East. Wood will be flanked by George Bussey, an all-conference left tackle, and seniors Marcel Benson at right guard and Breno Giacomini at right tackle. Benson and Giacomini both saw significant action last season. Another veteran, Danny Barlowe, will reclaim his left guard position.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The team's defense is a lot like its offense—aggressive, relentless and predicated on speed at every position. The Cardinals' base is the 4-3, but they show a lot of different looks and like to attack and pressure. The Cardinals led the Big East with 44 sacks last season and also forced 25 turnovers.

FRONT SEVEN The loss of run-stuffing tackle Amobi Okoye to the NFL left a big hole, but there is plenty of talent to fill it. Start with talented pass rush specialist Peanut Whitehead, who started 10 games at end as a true freshman. Junior tackle Adrian Grady started two games last year and likely will step into Okoye's role. The Cardinals have two returning linebackers, senior Malik

Jackson, and Preston Smith. Each is a good athlete with speed to defend the edges of the field. Lamar Myles probably will man the middle.

SECONDARY Only one starter, returns to this unit, but that doesn't mean it won't be experienced. Free safety Latarrius Thomas is the veteran, but cornerback Rod Council has 14 career starts and corner Bobby Buchanan was the top reserve last season. Newcomer Woodny Turenne, considered by some the top-ranked junior college prospect in the nation, also could step in and claim a corner job. The secondary might take a few games to develop chemistry, but there is enough talent for it to be very good.

SPECIAL TEAMS Art Carmody won the Lou Groza Award as the best kicker in the nation after converting 21-of-25 field goal attempts and going 60-of-60 on extra points. Wide receiver Trent Guy returns as the primary punt returner, and receiver JaJuan Spillman is another option to handle kickoff returns.

COACHING STAFF The easy-going personality of Kragthorpe, who resurrected the Tulsa program before his arrival at Louisville, will be a breath of fresh air for many players who had grown tired of the always high-strung Bobby Petrino. Kragthorpe no doubt will put his own touches on the offense, but the transition should be fairly smooth on both sides of the ball. Kragthorpe kept quarterbacks coach and passing game coordinator Jeff Brohm and defensive coordinator Mike Cassity, a rising star, on the staff.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
George Stripling	81	459	5.7	5
Anthony Allen	96	406	4.2	13

Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD
Brian Brohm	199-313-5	3,049	16

Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
Harry Douglas	70	1,265	18.1	6
Mario Urrutia	58	973	16.8	6

Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
JaJuan Spillman	22	487	22.1	1

Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Art Carmody	60	60	21	25	123

Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.
Malik Jackson	49	8	57	16/72
Lamar Myles	33	12	45	4/16
Preston Smith	22	22	44	5/10

Sacks	Jackson (9)
Interceptions	Jon Russell (3)



Brohm

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	7	Mario Urrutia (6-6, 228, Jr.)
	84	Scott Long (6-2, 215, So.)
LT	68	George Bussey (6-4, 298, Jr.)
	72	Brian Roche (6-4, 296, So.)
LG	63	Danny Barlowe (6-5, 290, Sr.)
	71	Marcus Gordon (6-6, 312, Sr.)
C	77	Eric Wood (6-4, 301, Jr.)
	62	Nick Borgelt (6-4, 290, Jr.)
RG	69	Marcel Benson (6-6, 310, Sr.)
	66	Mike Donoghue (6-2, 300, So.)
RT	78	Breno Giacomini (6-7, 300, Sr.)
	74	Jeff Adams (6-8, 300, Fr.)
TE	82	Gary Barnidge (6-6, 234, Sr.)
	81	Scott Kuhn (6-6, 255, Sr.)
WR	85	Harry Douglas (5-11, 170, Sr.)
	87	Corey Thompson (6-0, 185, Jr.)
QB	12	Brian Brohm (6-4, 226, Sr.)
	14	Hunter Cantwell (6-5, 230, Jr.)
RB	24	George Stripling (6-0, 192, Jr.)
	42	Anthony Allen (6-1, 232, So.)
FB	32	Brock Bolen (6-0, 237, Jr.)
	48	Joe Tronzo (5-11, 243, So.)
K	18	Art Carmody (5-9, 165, Sr.)
KR	3	Trent Guy (5-9, 170, So.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
8-30	Murray State*		3-2
9-6	Middle Tennessee*	44-17	1-0
9-15	▲ at Kentucky	59-28	4-1
9-22	Syracuse	28-13	3-2
9-29	at N.C. State		2-0
10-5	Utah^		0-2
10-13	at Cincinnati	23-17	4-1
10-19	at Connecticut^	48-17	3-0
10-27	Pitt	48-24	5-0
11-8	■ at West Virginia*	44-34	2-3
11-17	at South Florida	31-8	2-2
11-29	■ Rutgers*	25-28	1-4

*Thursday ^Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

Big East schedule strength: 4th

>The Series Kentucky (9-10): Since the rivalry was renewed in 1994, the Cardinals have ruled, 9-4. The quarterback showdown between Brian Brohm and Kentucky's Andre' Woodson could make this the best meeting yet.

>The Showdown at West Virginia: The last two meetings have been classic. Expect more of the same for what quickly has morphed into a national game. The Cards will score, but can they stop the Mountaineers' offense?

>The Smack Notable November. There are danger games before Halloween, but Louisville should start 9-0. Then, it's make-or-break time with three November games that will determine the Big East.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	8	Peanut Whitehead (6-6, 250, So.)
	56	Michael Adams (6-3, 261, So.)
NT	94	Adrian Grady (6-2, 292, Jr.)
	59	L.T. Walker (6-4, 305, So.)
T	57	Earl Heyman (6-3, 290, Jr.)
	92	Willie Williams (6-3, 305, Sr.)
E	88	Brandon Cox (6-4, 260, Sr.)
	98	Jonathan Holston (6-6, 250, So.)
SLB	11	Malik Jackson (6-2, 231, Sr.)
	46	Terrance Butler (6-3, 225, Sr.)
MLB	22	Lamar Myles (6-0, 220, Jr.)
	52	Mozell Axson (6-1, 226, Jr.)
WLB	6	Preston Smith (6-1, 220, Sr.)
	23	Stephen Garr (6-1, 200, So.)
LCB	14	Rod Council (5-11, 190, Jr.)
	1	Travis Norton (6-1, 191, Jr.)
FS	30	Latarrius Thomas (6-2, 213, So.)
	2	Richard Raglin (6-2, 195, Jr.)
SS	13	Jon Russell (6-2, 203, Sr.)
	38	Deon Palmer (6-0, 206, Sr.)
RCB	34	Bobby Buchanan (5-11, 190, Jr.)
	20	Lamar Alston (6-0, 190, Jr.)
P	29	Corey Goettsche (6-1, 196, So.)
PR	3	Trent Guy (5-9, 170, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

SCARLET KNIGHTS

Don't expect Rutgers to be a one-year wonder. With 14 starters returning—including three players who received All-American honors—and the addition of an excellent recruiting class, there is no reason the Scarlet Knights won't be in the mix for the Big East championship that eluded them last year.

A schedule that features eight home games—including the first five of the season—will help. Rutgers must play at Louisville to close out the season, but its other three road trips—Syracuse, UConn and Army—aren't heavy lifting. Matching last year's 11 wins will be difficult, but the Scarlet Knights will be a solid Top 20

team and play in a decent bowl.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Scarlet Knights have a blue-collar attitude, and it is evident in their offense. They run a pro set, but it is predicated on a power-rushing attack. They are willing to pound and grind out yards the old-fashioned way.

SKILL POSITIONS Running back Ray Rice was part of the Heisman Trophy talk last season and is a legitimate candidate for the award again this season. Rice possesses a great combination of power and speed—he can run over you or around you. Rice also makes the most of his numerous opportunities to



Rice

Quick hits

Stadium: Rutgers (artificial, 41,500).
Site: Piscataway, N.J.

Coach: Greg Schiano (30-41, 6 years)

Offensive coordinator:

James McNulty (1st year, 2nd at school)

Defensive coordinator:

Greg Schiano (6th year)

Last league title won: None.

Last year not in a bowl: 2004.

2006 record: 11-2, 5-2/T2nd Big East.

Texas Bowl: Beat Kansas State, 37-10.

carry the ball—he had a Division I-A-leading 335 attempts last season, rushed for 1,794 yards and scored 20 touchdowns. A big part of Rice's success last year is gone—All-American fullback Brian Leonard was a terrific lead blocker and ran some at tailback when Rice needed a rest. Finding one or more players to fill that role is critical. The staff is excited about Jack Corcoran's development, and incoming freshman Mason Robinson might be a factor.

DREW HALLOWELL FOR SN

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 WR Tim Brown. Possibly the fastest player ever to wear a Rutgers uniform, Brown should have plenty of one-on-one opportunities while opponents are trying to stop the team's running game.

2 DE George Johnson. Impressive as a true freshman, Johnson likely will earn a starting spot this year. He is tall, rangy and athletic and should develop into a major force coming off the edge.

A Big East coach says ...

If they do what they did last year two seasons in a row, I'll be shocked. QB **Mike Teel** is just OK, and RB **Ray Rice** is overrated. He doesn't have great speed. ... I thought they were an average team last year, not as good as West Virginia or Louisville. ... **Greg Schiano** is a good coach, and he has them really believing because they weren't that talented last year. He runs the defense, and they are zone-blitzing fools. Every week, they do something different on defense. But the kids know what they're doing, execute and play fast.

Because the team runs the ball so well, quarterback Mike Teel isn't asked to do much more than manage the game, but he has developed into a reliable and efficient passer. Kenny Britt, Tim Brown and Tiquan Underwood comprise a talented and deep stable of receivers. There is a wide-open race after the graduation of three-time All-Big East tight end Clark Harris. Kevin Brock is the only tight end with experience in the system. He is competing with Michigan State transfer Craig McGovern and two redshirt freshmen for the job.

OFFENSIVE LINE Three starters return to a unit that allowed only eight sacks—best in the nation—last season and should be among the best in the league this year. Two of those three, tackles Pedro Sosa and Jeremy Zutah, were All-Big East performers. The team won't name a starting center or right guard until the fall. Ryan Blaszczyk and Mike Gilmartin will get long looks.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The base defense is a 4-3, but Rutgers gives plenty of different looks—all of which are designed to disguise a seemingly endless stream of pressure and blitz packages. The team always is on the attack, and its defense is loaded with speed and athleticism.

FRONT SEVEN Tackle Eric Foster, a first-team All-American last season, is a disruptive force in the middle and the unit's emotional leader. He had 51 tackles and six sacks last season. Also returning is

end Jamaal Westerman, who tied for the team lead with eight sacks. The team will ask end George Johnson and tackle Pete Tverdov to take on larger roles to replace tackle Ramel Meekins and end William Beckford. Brandon Renkart is the lone starting linebacker returning, but Greg Schiano has recruited talented linebackers, and there are plenty of young players ready to step in and play.

SECONDARY Safeties Courtney Greene and Ron Girault are the best duo in the league and the backbone of the defense. Both were all-conference performers last year, and Greene is a Jim Thorpe award candidate. There is depth at the position, too. Starting cornerback Jason McCourty is back, and several experienced players, including McCourty's twin brother Devin, will compete for the other corner spot.

SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Jeremy Ito is coming off a season in which he scored 107 points to become the school's career-scoring leader. The team must replace all-Big East punter Joe Radigan and speedy return man Willie Foster. Three players will vie for the punting duties through the fall, and the team will look to a trio of experienced players to handle returns.

COACHING STAFF Continuity among Schiano's staff has been a key to the Scarlet Knights' revival. Schiano kept his staff intact again for this season but made minor adjustments to the duties of some assistants.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Ray Rice	335	1,794	5.4	20	
Kordell Young	29	138	4.8	3	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD		
Mike Teel	164-296-13	2,135	12		
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Kenny Britt	29	440	15.2	2	
Tiquan Underwood	23	290	12.6	4	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
James Townsend	8	128	16.0	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Jeremy Ito	41	42	22	29	107
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Courtney Greene	51	31	82	2.5/10	
Ron Girault	38	31	69	2/9	
Brandon Renkart	28	26	54	11.5/40	
Sacks: Jamaal Westerman (8)					
Interceptions: Greene (4)					

Sacks: Jamaal Westerman (8)
Interceptions: Greene (4)



Teel

DREW HALLOWELL FOR SN

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	88	Kenny Britt (6-4, 205, So.)
	83	James Townsend (6-1, 195, Sr.)
LT	77	Pedro Sosa (6-5, 290, Sr.)
	67	Corey Hyman (6-4, 290, Jr.)
LG	72	Mike Fladell (6-8, 325, Sr.)
	64	Dan Mazan (6-4, 290, Sr.)
C	61	Ryan Blaszczyk (6-4, 290, So.)
	62	Marlon Romulus (6-3, 285, Fr.)
RG	78	Kevin Haslam (6-7, 280, So.)
	74	Howard Barbieri (6-5, 290, Fr.)
RT	71	Jeremy Zutah (6-4, 290, Sr.)
	76	Mo Lange (6-7, 320, Fr.)
TE	89	Kevin Brock (6-5, 245, Jr.)
	85	Chris Rudanovic (6-5, 255, Sr.)
WR	7	Tiquan Underwood (6-2, 180, Jr.)
	2	Tim Brown (5-8, 150, So.)
QB	14	Mike Teel (6-4, 215, Jr.)
	15	Jabu Lovelace (6-2, 200, So.)
RB	27	Ray Rice (5-9, 200, Jr.)
	8	Kordell Young (5-9, 185, So.)
FB	19	Jack Corcoran (6-1, 225, So.)
	32	Jean Beljour (6-0, 225, Sr.)
K	1	Jeremy Ito (5-11, 190, Sr.)
KR	2	Tim Brown (5-8, 150, So.)

SN All-conference

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
8-30	Buffalo*		4-1
9-7	Navy^	34-0	4-1
9-15	Norfolk State		
9-29	▲ Maryland		2-3
10-6	Cincinnati	11-30	2-2-1
10-13	at Syracuse	38-7	3-2
10-18	South Florida*	22-20	1-1
10-27	● West Virginia	39-41	0-5
11-3	at Connecticut	24-13	2-3
11-9	at Army^		3-2
11-17	Pitt	20-10	2-3
11-29	■ at Louisville*	28-25	4-1

*Thursday ^Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

Big East schedule strength: 7th

>The Series Syracuse (8-28-1): For years, the Orange was the Eastern heavy-weight. Those days are over. Rutgers is the new king. And to stay there, it must continue to sit on Syracuse.

>The Showdown vs. West Virginia: Beating the Mountaineers remains on the to-do list to complete the Scarlet Knights' ascent. How bad have things been? Rutgers has lost 12 games in a row to WVU dating to a 1994 victory. This has to end.

>The Smack The party rolls on. The schedule is constructed for success. In fact, Rutgers should jet to a 6-0 start. That would set up big back-to-back home games that will determine contender status. A season-ending trip to Louisville may be huge.

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	31	George Johnson (6-4, 250, So.)
	92	Gary Watts (6-3, 240, Jr.)
T	56	Eric Foster (6-2, 265, Sr.)
	98	Vantrise Stuvivant (6-3, 265, Jr.)
T	97	Pete Tverdov (6-4, 260, Jr.)
	49	Mike Ziarnowski (6-2, 255, Jr.)
E	90	Jamaal Westerman (6-3, 250, Jr.)
	52	Chenry Lewis (6-3, 235, Jr.)
OLB	47	Brandon Renkart (6-3, 230, Sr.)
	17	Damaso Munoz (6-0, 205, So.)
MLB	33	Chris Quayle (6-0, 225, So.)
	44	Ryan D'Imperio (6-2, 230, So.)
OLB	34	Kevin Malast (6-2, 225, Jr.)
	48	Blair Bines (6-2, 245, So.)
CB	25	Jason McCourty (5-11, 185, Jr.)
	22	Dimitri Linton (5-9, 190, Jr.)
FS	36	Courtney Greene (6-1, 205, Jr.)
	6	Glen Lee (6-2, 190, Jr.)
SS	43	Ron Girault (5-11, 200, Sr.)
	38	Zaire Kitchen (6-1, 210, So.)
CB	21	Devin McCourty (5-11, 185, So.)
	28	Leslie Jackman (5-11, 180, So.)
P	1	Jeremy Ito (5-11, 190, Sr.)
PR	5	Dennis Campbell (5-9, 175, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

BULLS

Conventional wisdom suggests three teams, Rutgers, West Virginia and Louisville, will compete for the Big East title. That's probably true, but anyone who limits the discussion to that trio has not been paying attention.

South Florida steadily has improved and suddenly is primed to join the conference elite. USF has a rising star in quarterback Matt Grothe, 16 of 22 starters returning and, as usual, a stingy defense built on speed and athleticism.

The Bulls, who are coming off a 9-4 season, make an early trip to Auburn that will provide a gauge of their title-contending readiness. Two years ago, the Bulls beat Louisville; last year they beat West Virginia. If the Bulls can beat them both in one season, they—and not one of the big three—could be headed to a BCS game.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY South Florida is a no-huddle, spread formation team that tries to create mismatches by getting its fast and athletic players into open spaces. The Bulls' skill positions are filled with playmakers and game-breaking athletes.

SKILL POSITIONS The offense will revolve around Grothe, a sophomore who threw for 2,576 yards and completed 63.7 percent of his passes to win conference newcomer of the year honors last season. He also led the Bulls in rushing with 622 yards on 178 carries and ran for nine touchdowns. He must improve his decision-making; last year he threw 14 interceptions, one fewer than his TD-pass total.

With the quarterback job secure and the arrival of former prep superstar Mike Ford to give a lift to a struggling running game, this offense could be downright scary. Benjamin Williams, last year's starting tailback,



Moffitt

Quick hits

Stadium: Raymond James (grass, 65,000).

Site: Tampa.

Coach: Jim Leavitt (70-43, 10 years)

Offensive coordinator: Greg Gregory (1st year, 3rd at school)

Defensive coordinator: Wally Burnham (7th year, 8th at school)

Last league title won: None. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2004.

2006 record: 9-4, 4-3/T4th Big East

PapaJohns.com Bowl: Beat East Carolina, 24-7

2-POINT conversion

GET IT
DONE
OR ELSE

1 RB Mike Ford. This freshman, a super recruit out of Sarasota, Fla., who signed with Alabama out of high school, showed during the spring that he has the talent to become the primary tailback at some point this year.

2 LB Tyrone McKenzie. It's not often a second-team all-conference performer just falls into your lap. And this former Iowa State star comes with a special hardship waiver that grants him instant eligibility.

A Big East coach says ...

Matt Grothe is the Joe Montana of the Big East. He's cool and doesn't get rattled. He throws a nice spiral and is just a good quarterback. He can get them out of bad plays. ... I'm impressed with their perimeter speed on both sides of the ball. Their receivers can really cover some grass. ... How well they're going to play depends on how well their (three new offensive) coaches can get together and run that offense. A lot of times when you run a multiple offense, it's dependent on everyone on the staff being together and then the coordinator calling it right.

also returns and the Bulls have three of their four leading receivers back, including 6-5 Amarri Jackson, who averaged 15.1 yards per catch.

OFFENSIVE LINE The Bulls aren't dominant up front, but they are mobile and savvy. Center Nick Capogna, who was named the team's offensive lineman of the year by coaches, is the leader of the group and could merit postseason honors. So, too, could tackles Marc Dile and Walter Walker. Dile is versatile enough to play both tackle spots. Left guard Matt Huners, who also is capable of stepping in at guard, is a question mark after suffering a spring knee injury. If Huners is not available, Jake Griffin will take over for him opposite Ryan Schmidt.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Bulls play a basic 4-3 and rely on speed and athleticism to overwhelm opponents. South Florida generally does not have great size, but the Bulls always are fast and quick enough to bring pressure. Their ends are capable of creating havoc in the backfield.

FRONT SEVEN Three starters return to a line that features Woody George, Aaron Harris and George Selvie. Jarriett Buie also is one to watch. Selvie (84 tackles) and multi-talented end/linebacker Chris Robinson (seven sacks) made big impacts as redshirt freshmen last season and figure only to get better. Standout middle linebacker Ben Moffitt, who who is entering his fourth season as a starter, returns and should be flanked by either Robinson and Iowa State transfer Tyrone McKen-

zie or McKenzie and Brouce Mompremier, depending on how Robinson is used. No matter how they line up, this will be a formidable unit.

SECONDARY Speed and athleticism; the mantra continues. The Bulls have the best cornerback duo in the conference in seniors Trae Williams and Mike Jenkins. Williams is an outstanding cover corner, a physical run-support guy and a ballhawk who made seven interceptions last season. Jenkins is faster, bigger and capable of playing safety. Both are being billed as All-American candidates. Carlton Williams is big, strong and experienced and should pair with Danny Verpaele at the safety positions.

SPECIAL TEAMS Delbert Alvarado has a big leg—he kicked a Big East-record 56-yard field goal against Syracuse—but struggled with consistency as a freshman last season. Alvarado, who was 5-for-9 on field-goal attempts, also will compete with rugby-style punter Justin Teachey for that job. Taurus Johnson is dangerous on kickoff returns.

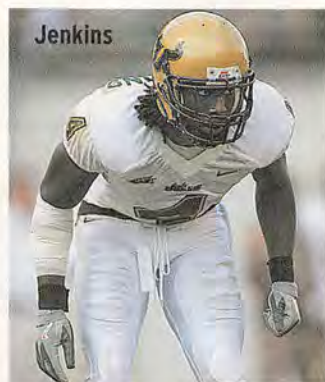
COACHING STAFF Jim Leavitt had to do some reshuffling of his staff after losing four assistant coaches, including two to conference rival West Virginia. Greg Gregory was promoted from tight ends coach to offensive coordinator. He'll have some help, as Leavitt hired former South Florida offensive coordinator Mike Canales as passing game coordinator/receivers coach. USF scored big by landing former Iowa State coach Dan McCarney as assistant head coach/defensive line.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Matt Grothe	178	622	3.5	9	
Benjamin Williams	122	436	3.6	4	
Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.		TD	
Matt Grothe	202-317-14	2,576		15	
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Taurus Johnson	37	494	13.4	2	
Marcus Edwards	27	328	12.1	2	
Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	
Taurus Johnson	14	316	22.6	0	
Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
Delbert Alvarado	13	14	5	9	28
Mike Benzer	21	22	2	6	27
Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.	
Ben Moffitt	75	37	112	11/28	
George Selvie	56	28	84	15/56	
Trae Williams	32	17	49	0.5/1	
Sacks: Chris Robinson (7)					
Interceptions: Trae Williams (7)					

Sacks: Chris Robinson (7)

Interceptions: Trae Williams (7)



Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Elon		1-1
9-8	■ at Auburn		
9-22	North Carolina	37-20	
9-28	West Virginia*	24-19	1-1
10-6	at Fla. Atlantic		1-0
10-13	UCF	24-17	2-0
10-18	at Rutgers^	20-22	1-1
10-27	at Connecticut	38-16	3-1
11-3	Cincinnati	6-23	2-2
11-10	at Syracuse	27-10	2-0
11-17	● Louisville	8-31	2-2
11-24	▲ at Pitt	22-12	2-2

*Friday ^Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

Big East schedule strength: 3rd

>The Series UCF (0-2): It's this simple: These Interstate 4 rivals don't like each other. And it's a great matchup when astute coaches Jim Leavitt and UCF's George O'Leary match wits.

>The Showdown vs. West Virginia: If this really is the Bulls' season, they need to slay the Mountaineers at home. USF likely will have to outscore West Virginia to win. Don't think it can't happen.

>The Smack Think big. The early game at Auburn screams "opportunity." Win there, and the possibilities for a magical season blossom. Also in USF's favor is the fact West Virginia and Louisville both come to Tampa. That means there's only one scary Big East road game: at Rutgers.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	11	Marcus Edwards (5-11, 175, Jr.)
	18	Amarri Jackson (6-5, 195, Sr.)
LT	78	Marc Dile (6-4, 310, Jr.)
	70	Jared Carnes (6-7, 315, Sr.)
LG	77	Jake Griffin (6-4, 305, Jr.)
	55	Jeremiah Warren* (6-4, 320, Fr.)
C	69	Nick Capogna (6-3, 275, Sr.)
	66	Kevin McCaskill* (6-2, 305, Fr.)
RG	65	Ryan Schmidt (6-4, 305, Jr.)
	61	Zach Hermann (6-3, 310, Fr.)
RT	75	Walter Walker (6-5, 320, Sr.)
	64	Jacob Sims (6-4, 280, Fr.)
TE	9	Cedric Hill (6-3, 240, Jr.)
	82	Ben Busbee (6-3, 240, So.)
WR	89	Taurus Johnson (6-1, 190, Jr.)
	87	Jessie Hester (6-0, 170, So.)
WR	29	Colby Erskin (5-9, 185, So.)
	86	A.J. Love (6-2, 190, Fr.)
QB	8	Matt Grothe (6-0, 200, So.)
	15	Grant Gregory (6-1, 205, Jr.)
RB	30	Benjamin Williams (5-7, 190, Jr.)
	20	Aston Samuels (5-10, 190, Fr.)
K	25	Delbert Alvarado (6-0, 175, So.)
KR	89	Taurus Johnson (6-1, 190, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
LE	90	Jarriett Buie (6-4, 255, Sr.)
	96	Woody George (6-3, 275, Sr.)
NT	76	Richard Clebert (6-1, 305, Sr.)
	91	Julian Riley (6-3, 290, Sr.)
T	94	Allen Cray (6-0, 295, Sr.)
	98	Aaron Harris (6-4, 255, So.)
RE	95	George Selvie (6-4, 245, So.)
	48	Joshua Smiley (6-3, 230, Fr.)
SLB	49	Chris Robinson (6-3, 240, So.)
	27	Tyrone McKenzie (6-2, 230, Jr.)
MLB	59	Ben Moffitt (6-2, 240, Sr.)
	57	Alonzo McQueen (6-1, 230, Fr.)
WLB	53	Brouce Mompremier (6-1, 225, Jr.)
	56	Sam Miller (5-11, 210, Sr.)
LCB	21	Trae Williams (5-10, 185, Sr.)
	6	Tyler Roberts (6-1, 190, Jr.)
FS	5	Nate Allen (6-2, 190, So.)
	17	Danny Verpaele (5-11, 200, Jr.)
SS	32	Carlton Williams (6-4, 205, Jr.)
	7	Louis Gachette (6-3, 205, Jr.)
RCB	4	Mike Jenkins (6-0, 200, Sr.)
	3	Jerome Murphy (6-1, 190, So.)
P	27	Justin Teachey (5-11, 170, Jr.)
PR	29	Colby Erskin (5-9, 185, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

PANTHERS

SN projection 5th, 6-6, Papajohns.com Bowl

National rank 55

Pitt is 9-12 against Division I-A opponents in Dave Wannstedt's two seasons. Even though Wannstedt has recruited well, don't look for a big improvement this year because the team must replace quarterback Tyler Palko, who started for three years. Still, seven wins are possible because of a soft home schedule.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

The Panthers run the West Coast offense in its purest form and aim to move the ball methodically down the field. They take shots at big plays but generally play it close to the vest.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Bill Stull, Palko's backup the past two years, Kevan Smith, a red-shirt freshman, and Pat Bostick, a heralded recruit, are locked in a battle for the quarterback job. Whoever is under center will be surrounded by a complement of experienced players. All of last year's starting backs and wideouts—including first-team All-Big



Kinder

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

East receiver Derek Kinder—return. If incoming running back LeSean McCoy is as good as advertised, the group only improves. Four starters return on the line, including left tackle Jeff Otah, who could blossom into a high draft pick. Center is the open spot, but the emergence of Jason Pinkston adds depth to the tackle position and gives coaches the flexibility to move a few of the veterans to shore up the center position.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The team lines up in the 4-3 and lets its line fight the battles up front. The Panthers rarely blitz or trick opponents, so if the front four don't dominate, the team gets into trouble.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The Panthers must replace all three starting linebackers, an obvious area of concern. Scott McKillop, who backed up All-American H.B. Blades in the middle, is the front-runner to start there. Most of the key performers return to the line,

Quick hits

Stadium: Heinz Field (grass, 65,000). **Site:** Pittsburgh.
Coach: Dave Wannstedt (11-12, 2 years, 6 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Matt Cavanaugh (3rd year, 4th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Paul Rhoads (8th year)

Last league title won: 2004 (tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 2004.

2006 record: 6-6, 2-5/6th Big East

Returning leaders: Rushing—LaRod Stephens-Howling (178 att., 893 yards, 9 TDs). Passing—Bill Stull (6-8-0, 69 yards, 1 TD). Receiving—Derek Kinder (57 rec., 847 yards, 6 TDs).

and end Greg Romeus has freakish ability, adds depth and will impact the pass rush. The secondary has the right mix of athleticism, experience and talent. Cornerback Aaron Berry, who is the front-runner for the spot vacated by Darrelle Revis, and free safety Eric Thatcher, who started before injuring his ankle last season, can make high-impact plays.

SPECIAL TEAMS Conor Lee has developed into a reliable kicker. Replacing All-Big East punter Adam Graessle likely

will be Dave Brytus, a Purdue transfer with a big leg. Lowell Robinson led the Big East in kickoff returns, and Berry is a star-in-the-making as the punt returner.

COACHING STAFF Defensive coordinator Paul Rhoads' focus has been moved from the defensive backs to linebackers. Wannstedt was unhappy with the Panthers' toughness and conditioning so he brought back strength coach Buddy Morris, who has a reputation for being a task master.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	81	Derek Kinder (6-1, 205, Sr.)
	87	Marcel Pestano (6-1, 190, Jr.)
LT	76	Jeff Otah (6-6, 340, Sr.)
	72	Chase Clowser (6-7, 330, Jr.)
LG	55	C.J. Davis (6-2, 300, Jr.)
	78	John Brown (6-4, 285, So.)
C	64	Chris Vangas (6-2, 295, Sr.)
	62	John Bachman (6-4, 280, So.)
RG	56	Joe Thomas (6-5, 285, So.)
	70	Dominic Williams (6-4, 300, Jr.)
RT	75	Mike McGlynn (6-5, 315, Sr.)
	77	Jason Pinkston (6-4, 280, So.)
TE	14	Darrell Strong (6-5, 260, Sr.)
	80	Nate Byhum (6-3, 225, So.)
WR	88	Oderick Turner (6-3, 200, So.)
	9	T.J. Porter (6-1, 185, So.)
QB	11	Bill Stull (6-3, 185, Jr.)
	12	Kevan Smith (6-3, 215, Fr.)
RB	34	LaRod Stephens-Howling (5-7, 175, Jr.)
	22	Kevin Collier (5-11, 180, So.)
FB	30	Conredge Collins (6-0, 235, Jr.)
	32	Shane Brooks (5-11, 220, So.)
K	37	Conor Lee (5-11, 195, Jr.)
KR	85	Lowell Robinson (6-0, 195, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	58	Joe Clermond (6-3, 260, Sr.)
	91	Greg Romeus (6-5, 230, Fr.)
T	93	Gus Mustakas (6-3, 265, Jr.)
	74	John Malecki (6-3, 270, So.)
NT	50	Rashaad Duncan (6-2, 290, Jr.)
	57	Craig Bokor (6-3, 290, So.)
E	41	Chris McKillop (6-3, 250, Sr.)
	92	Tyler Tkach (6-3, 230, Fr.)
SLB	8	Adam Gunn (6-2, 225, Jr.)
	44	Nate Nix (6-3, 210, Fr.)
MLB	40	Scott McKillop (6-2, 245, Jr.)
	52	Dan Loheyde (6-0, 200, Fr.)
WLB	15	Shane Murray (6-1, 210, So.)
	2	Dorin Dickerson (6-2, 200, So.)
CB	5	Kennard Cox (6-1, 195, Sr.)
	7	Jovani Chappel (5-9, 185, So.)
FS	28	Eric Thatcher (5-9, 190, Jr.)
	20	Invan Brown (6-0, 190, So.)
SS	10	Mike Phillips (5-11, 200, Sr.)
	4	Elijah Fields (6-2, 210, So.)
CB	17	Aaron Berry (5-11, 175, So.)
	9	Aaron Smith* (6-0, 180, Fr.)
P	18	David Brytus (6-4, 225, Jr.)
PR	17	Aaron Berry (5-11, 175, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Eastern Michigan	
9-8	Grambling State	
9-15	at Michigan State	23-38
9-22	• Connecticut	45-46, OT
9-29	at Virginia	38-13
10-10	Navy*	
10-20	Cincinnati	33-15
10-27	at Louisville	24-48
11-3	Syracuse	21-11
11-17	at Rutgers	10-20
11-24	▲ South Florida	12-22
12-1	■ at West Virginia	27-45

* Wednesday

■ Toughest game • Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big East schedule strength: 5th

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB LeSean McCoy. The coaches are counting on McCoy to turn around a perpetually struggling run game. A prep school product who signed with Miami out of high school, McCoy is big, fast and can make defenders miss.

2 CB Aaron Berry. A shutdown corner, Berry will draw the other team's top receiver each week. Coaches think the sophomore, who is as brash and cocky as he is talented, can handle that pressure.

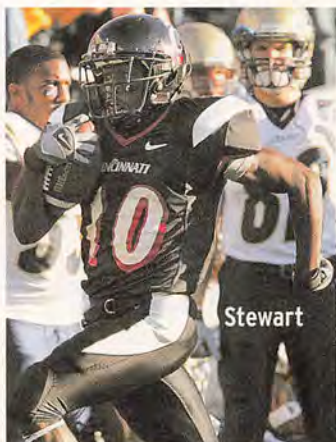
CINCINNATI BEARCATS

SN projection **6th, 5-7**

National rank **81**

There are 14 starters back, and the schedule is manageable, so there's no reason the Bearcats can't reach eight wins again, right? There is one catch: The team must adjust to the wide-open passing game of new coach Brian Kelly. That's a big change for a team built by former coach Mark Dantonio around the running game and a dominant defense. Even if the offense makes adjustments and thrives, the defense also must hold up because it likely will be on the field more.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The offense—called “Cat Attack”—



UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

is a no-huddle spread formation and features mostly one-back sets. The passing game relies on a mobile quarterback who makes quick decisions.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	16	Dominick Goodman (6-1, 208, Jr.)
	81	Antwan Giddens (6-3, 189, Sr.)
LT	72	Digger Bujnoch (6-5, 279, Sr.)
	79	Khalil El-Amin (6-5, 318, Jr.)
LG	74	Ken Rodriguez (6-3, 296, Sr.)
	77	Jeremy Bolton (6-5, 319, Sr.)
C	59	Chris Jurek (6-2, 265, So.)
	64	Chris Flores (6-2, 270, Sr.)
RG	76	Trevor Canfield (6-5, 318, Jr.)
	73	Mario Duenas (6-3, 282, Sr.)
RT	71	Jeff Linkenbach (6-6, 308, So.)
	70	C.J. Cobb (6-4, 299, Fr.)
TE	86	Doug Jones (6-4, 276, Sr.)
	14	Earnest Jackson (6-3, 219, Sr.)
WR	10	Derrick Stewart (5-11, 170, Jr.)
	26	Mike Daniels (5-7, 180, Sr.)
WR	24	Jared Martin (6-1, 183, So.)
	15	Marcus Barnett (6-1, 162, Fr.)
QB	4	Dustin Grutza (6-2, 194, Jr.)
	9	Ben Mauk (6-1, 200, Sr.)
RB	23	Butler Benton (6-1, 217, Sr.)
	48	Greg Moore (6-2, 218, Sr.)
K	87	Jake Rogers (6-3, 195, Fr.)
KR	16	Dominick Goodman (6-1, 208, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	56	Trevor Anderson (6-2, 252, Jr.)
	10	Lamonte Nelms (6-3, 233, Jr.)
T	95	Terrill Byrd (6-1, 270, Jr.)
	54	Jon Newton (6-3, 275, Sr.)
T	67	Adam Hoppel (6-2, 276, Jr.)
	90	Richard Mathews (6-3, 268, So.)
E	12	Anthony Hoke (6-1, 230, Sr.)
	82	Angelo Craig (6-5, 231, Sr.)
SLB	55	Leo Morgan (6-1, 204, Jr.)
	3	Delbert Ferguson (6-1, 226, Jr.)
MLB	45	Ryan Manalac (6-0, 221, Jr.)
	50	Andre Revels (6-0, 216, So.)
WLB	42	Corey Smith (6-1, 208, Jr.)
	31	Jon Carpenter (6-0, 220, Sr.)
CB	21	Mike Mickens (6-0, 166, Jr.)
	4	Martez Williams (5-8, 172, Fr.)
FS	18	Cedric Tolbert (6-0, 187, Jr.)
	17	Aaron Webster (6-3, 199, So.)
SS	13	Haruki Nakamura (5-10, 188, Sr.)
	44	Evan Sparks (6-0, 200, Sr.)
CB	6	DeAngelo Smith (6-0, 186, Jr.)
	25	Brad Jones (6-2, 196, So.)
P	47	Kevin Huber (6-1, 212, Jr.)
PR	10	Derrick Stewart (5-11, 170, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Nippert (artificial, 35,000). **Site:** Cincinnati.
Coach: Brian Kelly (1-0, first full year; 138-51-2 overall, 16 years)
Offensive coordinator: Jeff Quinn (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Joe Tresey (1st year)

Last league title won: 2002 (tie, C-USA). **Last year not in a bowl:** 2005.
2006 record: 8-5, 4-3/T4th Big East
International Bowl: Beat Western Michigan, 27-24

Returning leaders: Rushing—Greg Moore (162 att., 709 yards, 4 TDs). Passing—Dustin Grutza (137-225-13, 1,632 yards, 9 TDs). Receiving—Dominick Goodman (40 rec., 452 yards, 5 TDs).

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Dustin Grutza is a two-year starter but will battle Wake Forest transfer Ben Mauk for the starting quarterback job. Mauk is favored because he is the better passer. Three experienced running backs return—Greg Moore, Bradley Glatthaar and Butler Benton—but Kelly's one-back offense does not utilize a fullback, so they'll be called on to do a lot in pass protection and to catch passes out of the backfield. Dominick Goodman will be one of the team's top receivers. Two starters return to the line—tackle Jeff Linkenbach and guard Trevor Canfield—but they might as well be rookies. The linemen spent the spring learning pass blocking techniques and the faster pace of the new system.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Joe Tresey will mold the defense into an aggressive 4-3 unit. His defense at Central Michigan forced 29 turnovers and 31 sacks in 14 games last season.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The front seven was dominant last year and should be even better this year as five starters return. Run-stopping tackle Terrill Byrd clogs the middle, and end Trevor Anderson pressures from the edge. Middle line-backer Kevin McCullough is gone, but the team has plenty of talented 'backers, so filling his spot shouldn't be an issue.

Mike Mickens is a two-time All-Big East corner, and safety Haruki Nakamura is one of the smartest players on the defense. The other spots likely will be filled by fairly experienced players.

SPECIAL TEAMS All of the specialists are gone, and the competition at kicker and punter is intense. However, the

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
8-30	SE Missouri State*	
9-6	▲ Oregon State*	
9-15	at Miami (Ohio)	24-10
9-22	Marshall	
9-29	at San Diego State	
10-6	at Rutgers	30-11
10-13	Louisville	17-23
10-20	at Pitt	15-33
11-3	at South Florida	23-6
11-10	● Connecticut	26-23
11-17	■ West Virginia	24-42
11-24	at Syracuse	17-3

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big East schedule strength: 8th

Bearcats have plenty of return men, such as Goodman, Derrick Stewart and Nakamura.

COACHING STAFF Kelly begins his first season with the team, but he took over before last season's International Bowl, so he already has notched one win. Kelly, who led Central Michigan to the MAC title last year, brought seven assistants with him, so the transition for the players and staff should be smooth.

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 WR Derrick Stewart. The Bearcats will run a wide-open passing game, which means a speedster like Stewart will have plenty of opportunities to make big plays.

2 CB DeAngelo Smith. The first corner off the bench last season, Smith should step into the starting lineup. He showed his big-play potential last year when he returned an interception 84 yards for a touchdown.



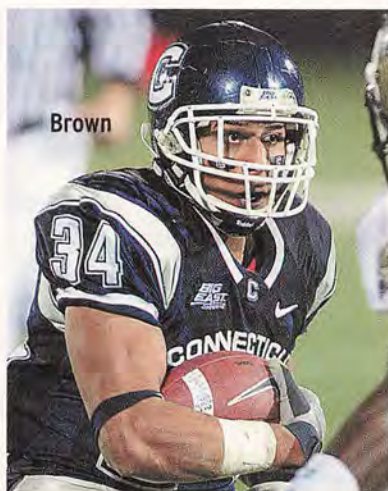
HUSKIES

SN projection **7th, 4-8**National rank **100**

Connecticut was inconsistent at quarterback, on the offensive line and in the secondary last season. It was the result of subpar performances and a rash of injuries. No offensive player started all 12 games at the same position, and eight different players started games in the secondary. The coaches believe the issues have been resolved and the players are healed. The Huskies could match last year's win total in their four nonconference games.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Huskies run a pro-style offense that gives defenses multiple looks. The offense is built around a strong running game, and they use the run to set up big plays in the passing game.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL D.J. Hernandez led the team in passing last season, but he switched to wide receiver dur-



Brown

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

ing spring practice, leaving Dennis Brown and junior college transfer Tyler Lorenzen to battle for the starting job. Standout tailback Donald Brown will be the focal point of the offense, and the Huskies have a talented and experienced corps of receivers to help the quarterback. Nine different players made starts along the line last season, so there is experience up front. But all five starting jobs are up for grabs.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Huskies play a standard 4-3 and rely heavily on their linebackers to make plays. UConn aims to shut down the run and force teams to become one-dimensional.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL This unit lost five starters, including both tackles and both safeties. Dan Davis was moved from end to tackle to shore up that position. The other starting tackle will be Rob Lunn or Brandon Dillon, but both likely will see significant playing time because coach Randy

Quick hits

Stadium: Rentschler Field (grass, 40,000). **Site:** Storrs, Conn.
Coach: Randy Edsall (41-51, 8 years)
Offensive coordinator: Rob Ambrose (2nd year, 6th at school)
Defensive coordinator: Todd Orlando (3rd year, 9th at school)

Last league title won: None. **Last bowl appearance:** 2004.

2006 record: 4-8, 1-6/T7th Big East

Returning leaders: Rushing—Donald Brown (161 att., 896 yards, 7 TDs). Passing—D.J. Hernandez (86-147-9, 849 yards, 9 TDs). Receiving—Larry Taylor (29 rec., 261 yards, 1 TD).

Edsall likes to rotate players at that position. There is little experience at safety, and both spots could end up in the hands of freshmen or sophomores. End Cody Brown might be the best pass rusher in the conference. Linebackers Danny Lananah and Ryan Henegan are the team's top two tacklers. Redshirt freshman linebacker Scott Lutrus was the star of the spring game as he picked off three passes and returned two for touchdowns. Starting corners Tyvon Branch and Darius Butler are experienced and

fast. Sophomore free safety Robert Vaughn is a rising star.

SPECIAL TEAMS The team has no returning specialists or return men. Tony Ciaravino was the only kicker and Desi Cullen the only punter on the roster in the spring, and neither has significant experience.

COACHING STAFF Edsall was considered a rising star after he led the Huskies to an 8-4 record and a Motor City Bowl win in their first year in the Big East (2004). But the Huskies are 3-11 in their past 14 Big East games.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	80	Terence Jeffers (6-2, 210, So.)
	24	Larry Taylor (5-6, 173, Sr.)
LT	64	William Beatty (6-6, 280, Jr.)
	73	Dan Ryan (6-9, 313, So.)
LG	62	Lawrence Green (6-3, 332, So.)
	58	Andrew Presnell (6-4, 310, So.)
C	68	Keith Gray (6-2, 287, Jr.)
	69	Trey Tonsing (6-2, 285, Jr.)
RG	55	Donald Thomas (6-4, 290, Sr.)
	74	Alex LaMagdelaine (6-3, 304, So.)
RT	79	Mike Hicks (6-6, 335, So.)
	78	Zach Hurd (6-6, 288, Fr.)
TE	90	Steve Brouse (6-4, 250, Jr.)
	91	Martin Bedard (6-3, 229, Jr.)
WR	3	Brad Kanuch (6-0, 188, So.)
	14	D.J. Hernandez (6-1, 209, Jr.)
QB	11	Dennis Brown (6-3, 196, So.)
	4	Tyler Lorenzen (6-5, 223, Jr.)
RB	34	Donald Brown (5-11, 214, So.)
	5	Lou Allen (6-1, 238, Jr.)
FB	47	Anthony Davis (5-10, 235, Fr.)
		Anthony Sherman* (5-11, 225, Fr.)
K	97	Tony Ciaravino (6-2, 228, Jr.)
KR	42	Robert McClain (5-10, 195, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	9	Lindsey Witten (6-4, 218, So.)
	96	Gary Mack (6-3, 236, Sr.)
T	65	Rob Lunn (6-3, 280, Jr.)
	52	Brandon Dillon (6-4, 284, So.)
T	6	Dan Davis (6-1, 287, Sr.)
	54	Alex Polito (6-5, 266, Fr.)
E	50	Cody Brown (6-4, 240, Jr.)
	56	Mike Cox (6-3, 238, Fr.)
SLB	32	Scott Lutrus (6-2, 227, Fr.)
	10	Greg Robinson (6-1, 216, Fr.)
MLB	48	Danny Lananah (6-0, 248, Sr.)
	59	Jarrell Miller* (6-2, 259, Fr.)
WLB	43	Ryan Henegan (6-1, 227, Sr.)
	8	Lawrence Wilson (6-1, 223, Fr.)
CB	28	Darius Butler (5-11, 186, Jr.)
	20	Terry Baltimore (5-10, 170, So.)
FS	33	Robert Vaughn (6-0, 192, So.)
	7	Glen Mourning (6-0, 208, So.)
SS	15	Donnell Ford (6-1, 192, Sr.)
	27	Aaron Bagsby* (6-0, 179, Fr.)
CB	29	Tyvon Branch (6-0, 199, Sr.)
	17	Darren McKhan (5-10, 179, Fr.)
P	13	Desi Cullen (6-1, 201, So.)
PR	24	Larry Taylor (5-6, 173, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at Duke	
9-8	Maine	
9-15	Temple	
9-22	at Pitt	46-45, 2OT
9-29	Akron	
10-13	at Virginia	
10-19	Louisville*	17-48
10-27	South Florida	16-38
11-3	▲ Rutgers	13-24
11-10	at Cincinnati	23-26
11-17	● Syracuse	14-20
11-24	■ at West Virginia	11-37

*Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big East schedule strength: 6th

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Tyler Lorenzen. Quarterback play has been abysmal for the Huskies the last two years. Lorenzen was brought in from a junior college to help, but he'll compete with Dennis Brown. It's vital one emerges.

2 DE Cody Brown. He broke his arm six games into the season and still managed to lead the team with 4½ sacks. He likely will reclaim a starting spot and be the Huskies most productive defensive lineman.

SYRACUSE ORANGE

SN projection **8th, 3-9**

National rank **105**

**Quick
hits**

Stadium: Carrier Dome (artificial, 49,262). **Site:** Syracuse, N.Y.
Coach: Greg Robinson (5-18, 2 years)
Offensive coordinator: Brian White (2nd year)
Defensive coordinator: Steve Russ (1st year, 3rd at school)

Last league title won: 2004 (tie). **Last bowl appearance:** 2004.

2006 record: 4-8, 1-6/77th Big East

Returning leaders: Rushing—Delone Carter (156 att., 713 yards, 4 TDs). Passing—Andrew Robinson (3-8-1, 20 yards, 1 TD). Receiving—Tom Ferron (30 rec, 351 yards, 2 TDs).

Greg Robinson is beginning his third season, and so far, Syracuse has shown little progress. The team has managed only one Big East victory in his two seasons, and with only 10 returning starters, there isn't much hope for improvement this year—especially with tailback Delone Carter likely to miss the season with a dislocated hip. A third consecutive last-place finish in the Big East seems likely.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Robinson has attempted to install a version of the West Coast offense, but the transition from the old freeze option days has been slow. Robinson hasn't had the personnel to pull off the

switch, particularly at quarterback. That should change this year.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL With Carter out, tailback Curtis Brinkley, who hurt his knee in spring practice but is expected to be ready by fall, becomes the starter, and coaches are scrambling to find a second back. Quarterback Andrew Robinson, who threw only eight passes last season, needs to develop into a competent passer. The team returns four of its top five receivers, and that should help. There are three returning starters on the line, including guard Carroll Madison, but the unit must improve its pass protection. It gave up a

Big East-worst 45 sacks in 2006.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The team plays an attacking 4-3 and attempts to force opponents to make mistakes by bringing pressure and hawking the ball. Robinson would like his defense to annually be at the top of the conference in sacks, turnovers forced and tackles for loss.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The top returnee is end Jameel McClain, who led the Big East in sacks (9.5). Tackle Tony Jenkins is an excellent run stopper, and strong safety Dwayne Davis will be one of the best in the conference at his position. Robinson will have to find three new starting linebackers, however, and two new corners as well. There are a number of talented young players to fill in the positions, but none have experience.

SPECIAL TEAMS Patrick

Shadle missed only two field goal attempts last year and was the team's most

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
8-31	• Washington*	
9-8	at Iowa	13-20
9-15	Illinois	31-21
9-22	■ at Louisville	13-28
9-29	at Miami (Ohio)	34-14
10-6	West Virginia	17-41
10-13	▲ Rutgers	7-38
10-20	Buffalo	
11-3	at Pitt	11-21
11-10	South Florida	10-27
11-17	at Connecticut	20-14
11-24	Cincinnati	3-17

*Friday

■ Toughest game • Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Big East schedule strength: 1st

consistent offensive weapon. Three players are battling to replace punter Brendan Carney, a four-year starter. Brinkley, only 5-9 but lightning quick, was one of the top return men in the Big East last season.

COACHING STAFF Robinson fired offensive line coach Bob Wylie, whose unit was the worst in the conference the past two years, and replaced him with Chris Wiesehan. He also promoted linebackers coach Steve Russ to defensive coordinator, a job Robinson held the past two seasons. The move enables Robinson, whose seat is warming up, to be more hands-on in other areas.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	2	Taj Smith (6-1, 188, Sr.)
	12	Rice Moss (6-2, 207, Sr.)
LT	64	Corey Chavers (6-5, 295, Jr.)
	74	Ryan Ehrie (6-6, 287, Jr.)
LG	59	Carroll Madison (6-2, 310, Sr.)
	70	Ryan Bartholomew (6-3, 290, Fr.)
C	67	Marvin McCall (6-2, 292, Sr.)
	62	Jim McKenzie (6-4, 280, Fr.)
RG	75	Ryan Durand (6-5, 310, Jr.)
	71	Adam Rosner (6-6, 308, Fr.)
RT	69	Larry Norton (6-3, 320, Sr.)
	73	Jonathan Meldrum* (6-5, 327, Fr.)
TE	80	Jewad Nesheiwat (6-4, 251, Sr.)
	89	Tom Ferron (6-3, 244, Jr.)
WR	1	Mike Williams (6-2, 204, So.)
	11	Lavar Lobdell (6-3, 200, So.)
QB	9	Andrew Robinson (6-3, 222, So.)
	13	Cameron Dantley (6-1, 218, Jr.)
RB	22	Curtis Brinkley (5-9, 203, Jr.)
	34	Paul Chiara (5-11, 210, Jr.)
FB	43	Tony Fiammetta (6-1, 235, Jr.)
	34	Paul Chiara (5-11, 210, Jr.)
K	42	Patrick Shadle (5-8, 201, Jr.)
KR	22	Curtis Brinkley (5-9, 203, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	91	Brandon Gilbeaux (6-3, 271, So.)
	93	Andrew Lewis (6-3, 282, Fr.)
NT	97	Arthur Jones (6-4, 289, So.)
	95	Nick Santiago (6-3, 302, Jr.)
T	51	Tony Jenkins (6-3, 286, Sr.)
	92	Anthony Perkins (6-4, 268, Fr.)
E	52	Jameel McClain (6-1, 256, Sr.)
	54	Mike Owen (6-4, 255, So.)
SLB	33	Ben Maljovec (6-3, 223, Jr.)
	46	Patrick Cantey (6-3, 216, Fr.)
MLB	45	Jake Flaherty (6-1, 228, Jr.)
	78	Mike Stencilik (6-0, 225, So.)
WLB	30	Vincenzo Giruzzi (6-3, 232, Jr.)
	36	Oliver Fernandez (6-1, 220, Jr.)
LCB	29	Jason Tanner (5-11, 200, Sr.)
	14	Quinton Brown (5-11, 180, Sr.)
FS	5	Joe Fields (6-1, 210, Sr.)
	15	Bruce Williams (6-0, 200, Jr.)
SS	26	Dwayne Davis (6-0, 200, Sr.)
	17	A.J. Brown (6-0, 201, Jr.)
RCB	27	Nick Chesnut (5-11, 184, Jr.)
	18	Matt Reid* (6-1, 165, Fr.)
P	5	Kyle Muir (6-3, 196, So.)
PR	15	Bruce Williams (6-0, 200, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman



Brinkley

PAUL NISELY / SN

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Andrew Robinson. A sophomore, Robinson steps in at quarterback and should provide a boost to the passing game. He is a much better fit for the West Coast offense than his predecessor, Perry Patterson.

2 MLB Jake Flaherty. He knows the system and has experience, but Flaherty must step up his game as he moves into a starting role for a linebacking corps that's littered with questions.

The Mountain West prides itself on balance and parity. With its diverse campus settings that can force a team to gasp for breath at 7,200 feet one week and swelter in the desert the next, the conference offers challenges few other leagues can match.

But if you look at the last three seasons, the facts don't seem to add up. Utah (2004), TCU (2005) and BYU (2006) all cruised through the league schedule without a blemish—a feat that once was considered to be all but impossible.

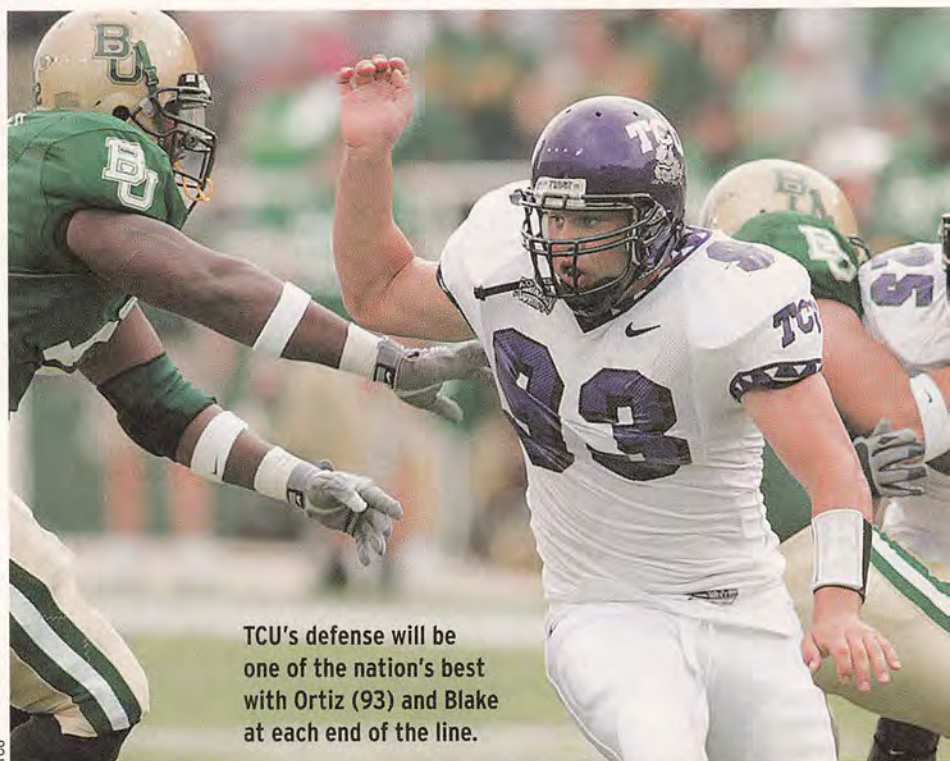
TCU appears poised to do the near-impossible again. The Horned Frogs stumbled early last season and lost to BYU and Utah before ripping off eight consecutive wins to finish with an 11-2 record and No. 22 final ranking.

The Frogs, who have won 11 games in three of the last four seasons, figure to be scary good again. A defense that ranked No. 2 nationally

returns nine starters, and the offense always finds enough ways to score.

BEST PLAYERS

Tommy Blake, DE, TCU. He is, simply, the best defensive player in the league. Double-teams don't bother him, and he wreaks havoc all over the field. Eight conference coaches probably were hoping he would leave early for the NFL, but he's back to haunt them one last time.



TCU's defense will be one of the nation's best with Ortiz (93) and Blake at each end of the line.

Honor roll

Best pregame atmosphere: Colorado State
Best home-field advantage: Wyoming
Best stadium: LaVell Edwards Stadium, BYU
Best fans: BYU
Best mascot: The Falcon, Air Force
Strongest arm: Rocky Hinds, UNLV
Most dangerous scrambler: Brian Johnson, Utah
Fastest running back: Aaron Brown, TCU
Most physical receiver: Kory Sperry, Colorado State
Surest hands: Casey Flair, UNLV
Most dominant O-lineman: Sete Aulai, BYU
Most disruptive end: Tommy Blake, TCU
Best run-stuffing tackle: Gabe Long, Utah
Hardest-hitting linebacker: Ward Dobbs, Wyoming
Best cover man: DeAndre Wright, New Mexico
Best NFL prospect: Tommy Blake, DE, TCU

Chase Ortiz, DE, TCU. In case you're wondering, yes, TCU just might have the best end duo in the nation. Ortiz, a perfect complement to Blake, takes advantage of every opportunity to disrupt the opposition's flow. This dynamic duo is more than a handful for any offense to handle.

Kyle Bell, RB, Colorado State. The Rams' 2006 season fell apart four days before the opener when Bell tore his ACL. After gaining 1,288 yards in 2005, the 232-pound Bell is healthy again and ready to rumble.

PLAYERS WHO MUST STEP UP

Shaun Carney, QB, Air Force. Now a senior, the consistent Carney has one last chance to resurrect Air Force's flagging fortunes. New coach Troy Calhoun wants to

ASCENDING ^

TCU. The Horned Frogs have a potential All-American in defensive end Tommy Blake and more team speed than anyone in the conference. With a favorable schedule, they could be the next outsider to break the BCS bank.

DESCENDING v

Colorado State. The Rams won or shared three of the first four Mountain West titles but have gone 14-21 the last three seasons. They bring a seven-game losing streak into 2007 and seem to have lost their identity.

All-conference

Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Ryan Wolfe, UNLV (6-1, 205, So.)
WR	Brent Casteel, Utah (5-10, 193, Jr.)
TE	Kory Sperry, Colorado State (6-6, 260, Sr.)
T	Jason Boone, Utah (6-4, 300, Sr.)
T	Will Robinson, San Diego State (6-6, 280, Sr.)
G	Matty Lindner, TCU (6-4, 298, Sr.)
G	Robert Conley, Utah (6-1, 316, Jr.)
C	Sete Aulai, BYU (6-0, 290, Sr.)
QB	Brian Johnson, Utah (6-1, 210, Jr.)
RB	Rodney Ferguson, New Mexico (6-0, 229, Jr.)
RB	Kyle Bell, Colorado State (6-2, 232, Jr.)

Defense

Pos.	Name, school
E	Tommy Blake, TCU (6-3, 252, Sr.)
E	Chase Ortiz, TCU (6-3, 255, Sr.)
T	Jeremy Geathers, UNLV (6-2, 245, Jr.)
T	Blake Smith, Colorado State (6-2, 257, Sr.)
LB	Drew Fowler, Air Force (6-2, 235, Sr.)
LB	Ward Dobbs, Wyoming (6-0, 229, Jr.)
LB	Jason Phillips, TCU (6-1, 234, Jr.)
CB	DeAndre Wright, New Mexico (5-11, 193, Jr.)
CB	Michael Medina, Wyoming (6-0, 190, Sr.)
S	Quinn Gooch, BYU (6-0, 196, Sr.)
S	Brian Bonner, TCU (5-11, 199, Sr.)

Specialists

Pos.	Name, school
K	Louie Sakoda, Utah (5-10, 178, Jr.)
P	Jimmie Kaylor, Colorado State (6-3, 197, Sr.)
KR	Brian Bonner, TCU (5-11, 199, Sr.)
SN	All-American

Players of the year

Offense: Kyle Bell, RB, Colorado State
Defense: Tommy Blake, E, TCU

Newcomers of the year

Offense: Max Hall, QB, BYU
Defense: Ricky Brewer, LB, Colorado State

run a more balanced attack, and it will be interesting to see how Carney adjusts.

Marcus Jackson, QB, TCU. This talented runner/thrower is the likely successor to Jeff Ballard, who cranked out win after win during his two years at the helm. Jackson looked good while spelling Ballard last fall, but now he faces the daunting task of leading a Top 25 program that's expected to win the MWC title.

Brian Johnson, QB, Utah. Johnson was one of the league's most exciting players before suffering a torn ACL near the end of the 2005 season. If he returns to form, Utah is a serious title contender. If not, the Utes fall somewhere short of special.

NEWCOMERS TO WATCH

Max Hall, QB, BYU. Hall, who became the starter after Cade Copper suffered a foot injury in the spring, must help Cougars fans forget all-everything quarterback John Beck. Hall, a transfer from Arizona State, has a strong resume, but it normally takes time to learn BYU's complex system.

Ricky Brewer, LB, Colorado State. This redshirt freshman has the sideline-to-side-line speed and ball-seeking ability CSU's defense has been lacking. Once he gets comfortable, he should become a force.

Frank Summers, RB, UNLV. This former Cal player and junior college All-American could provide much-needed punch to the running game. If he lives up to hype,

the Rebels' offense finally might blossom.

BEST COACH

Gary Patterson, TCU. All this guy does is win. He is 54-20 with three 11-win seasons in six years and has a chance to win big again in 2007. Most importantly, he has raised the bar for the rest of the conference with his eye-popping success.

BEST STAFF

TCU. It's hard to argue with success. The Horned Frogs seldom beat themselves and are as tough as any team around. These guys know how to harvest talent in the fertile recruiting state of Texas.

ON THE HOT SEAT

Mike Sanford, UNLV. Yes, Sanford faced a tough rebuilding task when he took over. But four wins in two years don't inspire confidence. If the Rebels don't show significant improvement this year, Sanford's days in the desert could be numbered.

GAMES TO WATCH

California at Colorado State, Sept. 8. This game marks just the second time a Pac-10 team has visited Fort Collins. A Rams win would do wonders for their season and the conference's reputation.

TCU at Texas, Sept. 8. One thing's for sure—the Frogs won't be intimidated. They have a rep-

utation for playing the big boys tough. The eyes of the nation will be on this one.

Wyoming at Boise State, Sept. 15. The Cowboys

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
TCU	11-2	11-1 ^{AA}	5-6	11-2	10-2	48-13
Utah	8-5	7-5	12-0*	10-2*	5-6	42-18
New Mexico	6-7	6-5	7-5	8-5	7-7	34-29
BYU	11-2*	6-6	5-6	4-8	5-7	31-29
Colorado State	4-8	6-6	4-7	7-6	10-4*	31-31
Air Force	4-8	4-7	5-6	7-5	8-5	28-31
Wyoming	6-6	4-7	7-5	4-8	2-10	23-36
San Diego State	3-9	5-7	4-7	6-6	4-9	22-38
UNLV	2-10	2-9	2-9	6-6	5-7	17-41

*Conference champ ^{AA}Joined conference

gave the Broncos their best regular-season test last fall, losing 17-10. They will try to finish the job against the Fiesta Bowl champs this year.

Utah at TCU, Oct. 18. This Thursday night clash could determine the league champion. These two heavyweights have produced classics the last two years, with each team winning once.

Utah at BYU, Nov. 24. What could be better than choking down your fifth turkey sandwich in three days while watching the Holy War? These two bitter rivals really do hate each other, and this game always lives up to the hype.

BOWL BOUND

TCU has a brutal schedule but is a bowl lock. BYU has momentum coming off its 11-2 season, and New Mexico looks good, too. That leaves Utah and Wyoming to fight for the league's fourth bid.

Sween



Recruiting buzz Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact
1. BYU	DE Devin Mahina, 6-6/221	OL Levi Mack, 6-5/315
2. San Diego State	DB DeAndre West, 6-1/195	OL Juan Bolanos, 6-7/310
3. Utah	QB Griffin Robles, 6-4/207	RB Matt Asiata, 6-0/232
4. TCU	ATH Jeremy Kerley, 5-10/170	DB Tekerrein Cuba, 6-2/180
5. UNLV	ATH Shane Horton, 6-2/190	DB Nehemiah Mundy, 6-1/180
6. Wyoming	RB James Davis, 5-8/181	LB Gabe Knapton, 6-4/205
7. New Mexico	OL Sylvester Hatten, 6-4/325	LB Justin Hickman, 6-3/235
8. Colorado State	LB Luke Diehl, 6-2/208	LB John Clark, 6-3/225
9. Air Force	DE Tyler Dallas, 6-2/221	OL Patrick Daugherty, 6-3/295

Rankings by Rivals.com

UNIT rankings	Backfield	Receivers	O-line	Overall	D-line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
Air Force	4	9	8	8	9	5	5	7	4	9
BYU	6	5	1	3	7	6	3	6	7	2
Colorado State	1	2	7	2	3	8	4	5	2	6
New Mexico	2	3	3	1	2	4	6	3	8	3
San Diego State	8	8	5	9	8	9	8	9	9	7
TCU	5	7	2	5	1	1	1	1	6	1
UNLV	9	1	6	6	5	7	9	8	3	8
Utah	3	6	4	4	6	2	7	4	1	5
Wyoming	7	4	9	7	4	3	2	2	5	4

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

Returning leaders

RUSHING Player, school, class	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.
1. Rodney Ferguson, New Mexico, Jr.	13	252	1,234	4.9	49	7	94.9	19
2. Aaron Brown, TCU, Jr.	12	154	801	5.2	45	9	66.8	66
3. Chad Hall, Air Force, Sr.	12	155	784	5.1	38	5	65.3	72
4. Atiyah Henderson, San Diego State, So.	12	174	764	4.4	40	1	63.7	178
5. Shaun Carney, Air Force, Sr.	12	188	618	3.3	39	8	51.5	—

PASSING Player, school, class	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1. Caleb Hanie, Colorado State, Sr.	12	209	342	61.1	12	2,427	11.6	11	124.3	42
2. Rocky Hinds, UNLV, Jr.	12	194	359	54.0	13	2,148	11.1	8	104.4	58
3. Karsten Sween, Wyoming, So.	9	128	212	60.4	8	1,304	10.2	9	118.5	100
4. Shaun Carney, Air Force, Sr.	12	82	137	59.9	3	1,192	14.5	12	157.5	—
5. Donovan Porterie, New Mexico, So.	8	71	133	53.4	2	967	13.6	6	126.3	—

RECEIVING Player, school, class	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.
1. Casey Clair, UNLV, Jr.	12	67	816	40	4	5.6	12.2	68.0	t29
2. Travis Brown, New Mexico, Sr.	13	64	867	52	4	4.9	13.5	66.7	t34
t3. Michael Ford, Wyoming, Sr.	12	60	674	40	4	5.0	11.2	56.2	t42
t3. Derrek Richards, Utah, Sr.	13	60	717	38	6	4.6	12.0	55.2	t42
5. Johnny Walker, Colorado State, Sr.	12	58	586	32	0	4.8	10.1	48.8	t51

HORNED FROGS

SN projection **1st, 10-2, Armed Forces Bowl** National rank **20**

Gary Patterson has built the Horned Frogs for the long haul, and it's a shock a more prestigious program hasn't swooped in and stolen him by now. Athletic, driven and experienced, the Horned Frogs are the favorite to win the conference title and might be strong enough to wind up in a BCS bowl. All eyes will be on an early September game against Texas.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Frogs like to run and have the horses to do it. They're also good at sprinkling in the occasional down-the-field pass. The balance makes them tough to stop consistently.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Jeff Ballard (.905 career winning percentage) had a wonderful run as the Frogs' reliable quarterback, but he's gone. Marcus Jackson and redshirt freshman Andy Dalton are battling to win the job. Jackson has more experience, but Dalton was the more decorated high school player. Aaron Brown again should be the Horned Frogs'



lead running back after averaging 5.2 yards per carry last fall. Donald Massey is the best of a fine group of pass-catchers. TCU usually has a salty group of guys up front, and this year should be no different. Three starters return: center Blake Schlueter, guard Matty Lindner and tackle Wade Sisk. Much will depend on the play of two new starters.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Coordinator Dick Bumpas, one of the best in the business, uses a hyperactive, all-to-the-ball, 4-2-5 scheme that usually stymies and confuses opposing offenses.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Only two starters were lost from a defense that finished second in the nation in both rushing defense and total defense. Conference quarterbacks have been seeing end Tommy Blake in their nightmares seemingly for forever, and the quick 252-pounder is poised for another stellar season as a senior. End

Quick hits

Stadium: Amon G. Carter (grass, 44,008)

Site: Fort Worth, Texas

Coach: Gary Patterson (54-20, 6 years, 9 at school)

Offensive coordinator: Mike Schultz (7th year, 10th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Dick Bumpas (4th year)

Last league title won: 2005. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2004.

2006 record: 11-2, 6-2/2nd MWC

Poinsettia Bowl: Beat Northern Illinois, 37-7

Returning leaders: Rushing—Aaron Brown (154 att., 801 yards, 9 TDs).

Passing—Marcus Jackson (26-44-1, 386 yards, 2 TDs). Receiving—Aaron Brown (34 rec., 455 yards, 1 TD).

Chase Ortiz also is coming off an all-Mountain West season. There's more: Both starting linebackers return, including playmaker Jason Phillips. Four of the five secondary starters return. Bumpas' three-safety attack will be led by Brian Bonner and David Roach. Cornerbacks Rafael Priest and Nick Sanders return after excellent seasons as redshirt freshmen.

SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Chris Manfredini is a remarkable 25-

of-27 on field goals in his two years at TCU. Bonner could be the best punt returner in the conference. Derek Wash and David Porter will fight for the punting job.

COACHING STAFF With Patterson and Bumpas leading the way, TCU is one of the most well-coached teams in the Mountain West, if not the nation. The Horned Frogs come to play every Saturday and seldom beat themselves with mistakes.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	2	Donald Massey (5-11, 172, Jr.)
	3	Marcus Brock (6-0, 182, Sr.)
LT	71	Wade Sisk (6-7, 271, Sr.)
	79	Nic Richmond (6-8, 298, So.)
LG	64	Matty Lindner (6-4, 298, Sr.)
	60	Preston Phillips (6-6, 293, Jr.)
C	75	Blake Schlueter (6-3, 272, Jr.)
	74	Tony Savino (6-2, 277, Sr.)
RG	65	Giles Montgomery (6-5, 295, Jr.)
	63	Heath Raetz (6-5, 315, Jr.)
RT	70	Marshall Newhouse (6-3, 317, So.)
	61	Marcus Cannon (6-5, 319, Fr.)
TE	86	Shae Reagan (6-4, 261, Jr.)
	89	Quinton Cunigan (6-3, 237, Sr.)
WR	21	Ervin Dickerson (6-1, 200, Sr.)
	20	Bart Johnson (6-1, 190, Fr.)
WR	85	Walter Bryant (6-4, 206, Jr.)
	13	Derek Moore (6-3, 177, Sr.)
QB	11	Marcus Jackson (6-1, 216, So.)
	14	Andy Dalton (6-3, 185, Fr.)
RB	23	Aaron Brown (6-1, 196, Jr.)
	24	Joseph Turner (6-1, 226, So.)
K	44	Chris Manfredini (5-9, 165, Sr.)
KR	23	Aaron Brown (6-1, 196, Jr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
LE	93	Chase Ortiz (6-3, 255, Sr.)
	98	Jerry Hughes (6-2, 248, So.)
T	55	James Vess (6-3, 282, Jr.)
	96	Wayne Daniels (6-2, 240, So.)
NT	56	Cody Moore (6-1, 292, Jr.)
	57	Cory Grant (6-2, 303, Fr.)
RE	97	Tommy Blake (6-3, 252, Sr.)
	90	Clarence Leatch (6-4, 238, Fr.)
SLB	46	David Hawthorne (6-0, 225, Sr.)
	51	Robert Henson (6-1, 228, Jr.)
MLB	39	Jason Phillips (6-1, 234, Jr.)
	41	Daryl Washington (6-3, 228, So.)
LCB	20	Nick Sanders (5-10, 174, So.)
	43	Alex Ibiloyle (6-0, 170, Fr.)
WS	27	David Roach (6-2, 215, Sr.)
	6	Brian Bonner (5-11, 199, Sr.)
FS	4	Steven Coleman (6-3, 204, Jr.)
	27	David Roach (6-2, 215, Sr.)
SS	6	Brian Bonner (5-11, 199, Sr.)
	29	Stephen Hodge (6-0, 212, Jr.)
RCB	15	Torrey Stewart (5-11, 175, Sr.)
	10	Rafael Priest (5-10, 163, So.)
P	11	Derek Wash (6-4, 177, Sr.)
PR	6	Brian Bonner (5-11, 199, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Baylor	17-7
9-8	■ at Texas	
9-13	at Air Force*	38-14
9-22	SMU	
9-29	Colorado State	45-14
10-6	at Wyoming	26-3
10-13	at Stanford	
10-18	● Utah*	7-20
11-3	New Mexico	27-21
11-8	▲ at BYU*	17-31
11-17	UNLV	25-10
11-24	at San Diego State	52-0

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to be upset

MWC schedule strength: 6th

2-POINT conversion

GET IT
DONE
OR ELSE

1 QB Marcus Jackson. The sophomore had an impressive debut while filling in briefly last year, but he still has to prove he has the stuff to be a consistently winning starter.

2 DE Clarence Leatch. With his speed and burst, Leatch could become an effective pass rusher for a team that has several—which would be helpful early when Fort Worth experiences its notorious September heat.

COUGARS

SN projection **2nd, 9-3, New Mexico Bowl** National rank **25**

Quick hits

Stadium: LaVell Edwards (grass, 64,045). **Site:** Provo, Utah.
Coach: Bronco Mendenhall (17-8, 2 years, 4 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Robert Anae (3rd year, 5th at school)
Defensive coordinator: Bronco Mendenhall (5th year)

Last league title won: 2006. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2004.

2006 record: 11-2, 8-0/1st MWC

Las Vegas Bowl: Beat Oregon, 38-8

Returning leaders: Rushing—Fui Vakapuna (92 att., 445 yards, 8 TDs).
 Passing—None. Receiving—Matt Allen (27 rec., 420 yards, 3 TDs).

Few teams that finished last season in the top 25 have as much to replace as the Cougars, but don't be surprised if BYU has another fine season. Bronco Mendenhall practically has BYU back to yearly reloading rather than rebuilding.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

BYU's scarily efficient short passing game is predicated on excellent blocking, skill people with burst, a complementary rushing game and a heady quarterback.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL The team has to replace four starting skill players, but the line could be among the best in



MARK A. PHILBRICK/BYU

school history. Max Hall, an inexperienced transfer from Arizona State, will try to add his name to the school's

remarkable quarterbacks legacy. The coaches believe Hall's intelligence and savvy will get him through the pressure. The leading candidate to replace Curtis Brown, BYU's career rushing leader, is fan favorite Fui Vakapuna, who had 92 carries for 445 yards last season. Hall's targets will include 2004 star wideout Austin Collie, who is coming off a church mission. Capably replacing second-leading receiver Jonny Harline will be key to the offense. Dennis Pitta, an inexperienced but big pass-catching target, is the likely candidate. The line lost one starter, but there are as many as 13 players who are ready to compete for playing time.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY BYU's aggressive 3-4 defense is keyed by its athletic and deep linebackers, and it thrives on forcing turnovers.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Seven starters return to a unit that ranked 10th in the nation in scoring defense. David Nixon and Bryan Kehl are active, experienced outside linebackers, and Nixon is healthy after toughing through most of last season with a groin injury. Kelly Poppinga, who filled in at both outside spots last fall, will be in the middle. BYU is less experienced along the line and will depend on emerging talents Jan Jorgensen, Ian Dulan and Russell Tialavea. Free safety Quinn Gooch is an all-

American candidate, and strong safety Dustin Gabriel also returns. At cornerback, Ben Criddle was one of BYU's most pleasant surprises last year and appears poised for a nice senior season. Kayle Buchanan, Brandon Bradley and Brandon Howard will compete to replace Justin Robinson at the other corner.

SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Jared

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Arizona	13-16
9-8	■ at UCLA	
9-15	▲ at Tulsa	49-24
9-22	Air Force	33-14
9-29	at New Mexico	42-17
10-13	at UNLV	52-7
10-20	Eastern Washington	
10-27	at San Diego State	47-17
11-3	Colorado State	24-3
11-8	TCU*	31-17
11-17	at Wyoming	55-7
11-24	● Utah	33-31

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to be upset

MWC schedule strength: 4th

McLaughlin and punter Derek McLaughlin are gone, and the Cougars are keeping their fingers crossed Mitch Payne can get the job done at both positions. Brown will be difficult to replace as a kick returner.

COACHING STAFF Only offensive line coach Mark Weber, a veteran line guru, is new. Mendenhall is big on staff togetherness, and it's hard to argue with the results.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	3	Michael Reed (6-1, 202, Jr.)
	10	Matt Allen (6-0, 177, Sr.)
LT	65	Dallas Reynolds (6-5, 328, Jr.)
	64	R.J. Willing (6-5, 300, So.)
LG	76	Ray Feinga (6-5, 322, Jr.)
	75	Walter Kahaialii (6-3, 320, Fr.)
C	67	Sete Aulai (6-0, 290, Sr.)
	64	R.J. Willing (6-5, 300, So.)
RG	74	Travis Bright (6-5, 314, Jr.)
	71	Rick Wolfley (6-3, 326, Fr.)
RT	68	David Oswald (6-8, 325, Jr.)
	77	Jason Sperdon (6-5, 275, Fr.)
TE	32	Dennis Pitta (6-5, 230, So.)
	37	Vic So'oto (6-3, 233, So.)
WR	2	Bryce Mahuika (5-9, 185, Jr.)
	86	Daniel Tervort (5-11, 200, So.)
WR	10	Matt Allen (6-0, 177, Sr.)
	9	Austin Collie (6-2, 212, So.)
QB	15	Max Hall (6-1, 200, So.)
	12	Brenden Gaskins (6-5, 220, So.)
RB	1	Fui Vakapuna (6-1, 234, Jr.)
	45	Harvey Unga (6-0, 221, Fr.)
K	38	Mitch Payne (6-2, 201, Fr.)
KR	9	Austin Collie (6-2, 212, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
LE	77	Ian Dulan (6-1, 274, So.)
	92	Brett Denney (6-4, 251, So.)
NT	52	Russell Tialavea (6-3, 300, So.)
	90	Moses Foketi (6-0, 270, Jr.)
RE	84	Jan Jorgensen (6-3, 260, So.)
	91	Judd Anderton (6-5, 270, Sr.)
SLB	41	Bryan Kehl (6-3, 260, So.)
	35	Matt Bauman (6-1, 220, So.)
MLB	46	Kelly Poppinga (6-2, 240, Sr.)
	47	Terrance Hooks (6-1, 218, So.)
MLB	42	Shawn Doman (6-2, 219, So.)
	36	Markell Staffieri (6-3, 232, Sr.)
WLB	43	David Nixon (6-3, 223, Jr.)
	31	Chris Bolden (6-0, 248, Sr.)
CB	34	Kayle Buchanan (6-1, 191, Sr.)
	4	Brandon Howard (5-9, 170, So.)
SS	28	Dustin Gabriel (6-1, 213, Sr.)
	14	Corby Hodgkiss (5-11, 206, Sr.)
FS	25	Quinn Gooch (6-0, 196, Sr.)
	23	David Tafuna (6-1, 206, Sr.)
CB	21	Ben Criddle (6-0, 185, Sr.)
	19	Andre Saulsberry (5-10, 178, Sr.)
P	38	Mitch Payne (6-2, 201, Fr.)
PR	9	Austin Collie (6-2, 212, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

2-POINT conversion
 GET IT
 DONE
 OR ELSE

1 QB Max Hall. Hall clearly is talented, but he also is an unknown commodity. He was a star in high school but never has taken a college snap. BYU is a Top 25 team only if he has a big season.

2 MLB Kelly Poppinga. The senior played on the outside last year but now will man BYU's important middle backer position. Poppinga has leadership skills and grit.



NEW MEXICO LOBOS

OFFENSE New offensive coordinator Dave Baldwin's high-tech multiple attack will make good use of sophomore quarterback Donovan Porterie's athleticism and the running skills of Rodney Ferguson, who might be the conference's best back. Ferguson, who rushed for 1,234 yards last season, will operate behind experienced tackles Anthony Kilby and Devin Clark and 260-pound fullback Matt Quillen. Porterie's top receivers, Travis Brown and Marcus Smith, combined for 117 catches, 1,726 yards and 13 touchdowns last year.

DEFENSE The return of 10 starters bodes well, although that experience needs to be coupled with serious improvement. End Tyler Donaldson and cornerbacks DeAndre Wright and Glover Quin are stars in the making. The line-backing corps is deep with the return of starters Major Mosley, George Carter and Cody Kase. This is the most experienced defense in the Mountain West; whether that translates into better play is the question. Fans will find out quickly because the Lobos open conference play against BYU.

SPECIAL TEAMS Replacing Ken-ny Byrd, the most accurate kicker in conference history, will be difficult. The candidates are Eric Garrison and John Sullivan. Returning punter Jordan Scott needs to ratchet up his 40.2-yard average. Smith and Wright are solid on kickoff returns.

BOTTOM LINE Rocky Long, an excellent organizer and recruiter, will keep the Lobos in contention for bowl berths. Evidence of the team's upward mobility was provided by the state legislature, which gave the school \$7 million to build a new indoor practice facility, further cementing the notion New Mexico has become more than just a basketball school.

Quickhits

Stadium: University (grass, 38,634)
Site: Albuquerque, N.M.
Coach: Rocky Long (52-57, 9 years, 14 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Dave Baldwin (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Osia Lewis (5th year)
Last league title won: 1964 (WAC, tie)
Last year not in a bowl: 2005
2006 record: 6-7, 4-4/5th MWC
New Mexico Bowl: Lost to San Jose State, 20-12

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at UTEP	26-13
9-8	New Mexico State	34-28
9-15	at Arizona	
9-22	Sacramento State	
9-29	▲ BYU	17-42
10-13	at Wyoming	10-14
10-20	at San Diego State	41-14
10-25	Air Force*	7-24
11-3	■ at TCU	21-27
11-10	● Colorado State	20-19
11-17	at Utah	34-31
11-24	UNLV	39-36

*Thursday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

MWC schedule strength: 8th

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	81	Travis Brown (6-3, 189, Sr.)
LT	63	Matt Streid (6-3, 321, Jr.)
LG	75	Anthony Kilby (6-5, 332, Sr.)
C	66	Vince Natali (6-2, 308, Sr.)
RG	77	Bart Miller (6-4, 295, Sr.)
RT	70	Devin Clark (6-4, 312, Sr.)
TE	85	Chris Mark (6-5, 257, Jr.)
WR	4	Marcus Smith (6-2, 214, Sr.)
QB	15	Donovan Porterie (6-3, 206, So.)
RB	21	Rodney Ferguson (6-0, 229, Jr.)
FB	31	Matt Quillen (6-0, 250, Jr.)
K	86	Eric Garrison (6-0, 195, Sr.)
KR	2	DeAndre Wright (5-11, 193, Jr.)

Defense

LE	53	Kendall Briscoe (6-1, 271, So.)
NT	92	Wesley Beck (6-1, 279, Jr.)
RE	55	Tyler Donaldson (6-4, 226, Sr.)
LLB	38	Major Mosley (6-3, 231, Sr.)
MLB	47	Cody Kase (6-1, 216, Sr.)
RLB	46	George Carter (6-2, 225, Sr.)
LCB	19	Glover Quin (6-0, 203, Jr.)
S	30	Ian Clark (6-0, 198, So.)
S	96	Frankie Solomon (5-10, 173, So.)
S	34	Oi Swift (5-9, 196, Sr.)
RCB	2	DeAndre Wright (5-11, 193, Jr.)
P	39	Jordan Scott (6-0, 195, Sr.)
PR	30	Ian Clark (6-0, 210, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman
SN All-conference

UTAH UTES

OFFENSE If the Utes can find a tough running back to complement quarterback Brian Johnson and receivers Brent Casteel and Derek Richards in its spread offense, the attack could be potent. But that's a big if. One candidate is Darryl Poston, an oft-injured back who has been granted a seventh year of eligibility by the NCAA. Whoever wins the running back sweepstakes probably will be heading to his right. Guard Robert Conley and tackle Jason Boone are two of the league's best linemen.

DEFENSE This unit loses three all-conference performers. Line-backing could be a strength with rugged middle man Joe Jianonni anchoring a group that also includes Malakai Mokofisi. End Martail Burnett is the most disruptive force on Utah's line. The secondary is a major question mark. Free safety Steve Tate and cornerback Brice McCain have experience, but everyone else is a work in progress.

SPECIAL TEAMS In this era of hyper-specialization, Louie Sakoda defies logic as both a very good punter and kicker. Sakoda is good enough, in fact, to be listed as a candidate for both the Ray Guy and Lou Groza awards. McCain and Casteel are dangerous kickoff return men, and Brian Hernandez and Marquis Wilson will battle for punt return duties.

BOTTOM LINE Utah will be tested by an ambitious nonconference schedule that includes Oregon State and Louisville on the road and UCLA in Salt Lake City. The one nonleague game that looks like a gimme is Utah State—and that's a rivalry. Are the Utes up to such a rugged journey? If they are, former defensive coordinator Kyle Whittingham could win his third straight bowl game and solidify his status as an excellent replacement for former coach Urban Meyer.

Quickhits

Stadium: Rice-Eccles (artificial, 45,017).
Site: Salt Lake City
Coach: Kyle Whittingham (15-10, 2 years; 13 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Andy Ludwig (3rd year, 4th at school)
Defensive coordinator: Gary Andersen (3rd year, 10th at school)
Last league title won: 2004
Last year not in a bowl: 2002
2006 record: 8-5, 5-3/T3rd MWC
Armed Forces Bowl: Beat Tulsa, 25-13

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
8-30	at Oregon State*	
9-8	Air Force	17-14
9-15	▲ UCLA	10-31
9-22	at UNLV	45-23
9-29	Utah State	48-0
10-5	■ at Louisville^	
10-13	San Diego State	38-7
10-18	at TCU*	20-7
10-27	at Colorado State	35-22
11-10	● Wyoming	15-31
11-17	New Mexico	31-34
11-24	at BYU	31-33

*Thursday ^Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

MWC schedule strength: 1st

Projected starters






Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	26	Derek Richards (5-11, 175, Sr.)
LT	68	Jason Boone (6-4, 300, Sr.)
LG	68	Zane Beadles (6-4, 312, So.)
C	63	Kyle Gunther (6-4, 304, Sr.)
RG	66	Robert Conley (6-1, 316, Jr.)
RT	65	Dustin Hensel (6-7, 320, Jr.)
TE	48	Matt Sims (6-1, 251, Sr.)
WR	5	Brent Casteel (5-10, 193, Jr.)
WR	16	Brian Hernandez (6-0, 183, Sr.)
QB	3	Brian Johnson (6-1, 210, Jr.)
RB	9	Darryl Poston (5-11, 200, Sr.)
K	35	Louie Sakoda (5-10, 178, Jr.)
KR	1	Brice McCain (5-9, 189, Jr.)

Defense

E	93	Martail Burnett (6-3, 262, Sr.)
T	92	Kenape Eliapo (6-0, 303, So.)
NT	94	Gabe Long (6-3, 290, Sr.)
E	56	Greg Newman (6-4, 260, Jr.)
OLB	22	Malakai Mokofisi (6-2, 243, Sr.)
MLB	44	Joe Jianonni (6-0, 235, Sr.)
OLB	14	Kyle Brady (6-1, 234, Sr.)
RCB	4	Sean Smith (6-3, 217, So.)
FS	28	Steve Tate (5-11, 195, Sr.)
SS	43	Joe Dale (5-11, 197, So.)
LCB	1	Brice McCain (5-9, 189, Jr.)
P	35	Louie Sakoda (5-10, 178, Jr.)
PR	5	Brent Casteel (5-10, 193, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman
SN All-conference

				
AIR FORCE	COLORADO STATE	SAN DIEGO STATE	UNLV	WYOMING
Date Opponent	Date Opponent	Date Opponent	Date Opponent	Date Opponent
9-1 South Carolina State	9-1 ▲ vs. Colorado*	9-8 ▲ vs. Washington State*	8-30 at Utah State*	9-1 ▲ Virginia
9-8 at Utah	9-8 ■ California	9-15 ■ at Arizona State	9-8 ■ Wisconsin	9-8 Utah State
9-13 TCU*	9-22 at Houston	9-22 Portland State	9-15 Hawaii	9-15 at Boise State
9-22 at BYU	9-29 at TCU	9-29 Cincinnati	9-22 ▲ Utah	9-22 at Ohio
9-29 at Navy	10-6 San Diego State	10-6 at Colorado State	9-29 at Nevada	10-6 TCU
10-6 UNLV	10-13 Air Force	10-13 at Utah	10-6 at Air Force	10-13 ● New Mexico
10-13 at Colorado State	10-20 at UNLV	10-20 New Mexico	10-13 BYU	10-20 at Air Force
10-20 ▲ Wyoming	10-27 Utah	10-27 BYU	10-20 Colorado State	10-27 UNLV
10-25 at New Mexico*	11-3 at BYU	11-3 ● Wyoming	10-27 at Wyoming	11-3 at San Diego State
11-3 ● Army	11-10 at New Mexico	11-10 at UNLV	11-10 ● San Diego State	11-10 at Utah
11-10 ■ at Notre Dame	11-17 Georgia Southern	11-17 at Air Force	11-17 at TCU	11-17 ■ BYU
11-17 San Diego State	11-23 ● Wyoming^	11-24 TCU	11-24 at New Mexico	11-23 at Colorado State*
*Thursday	*at Denver ^Friday	*at Seattle	*Thursday	*Friday
MWC schedule strength: 5th	MWC schedule strength: 3rd	MWC schedule strength: 7th	MWC schedule strength: 2nd	MWC schedule strength: 9th
■ Toughest game ● Must win ▲ Best chance to pull an upset				

5. WYOMING

SN projection: 6-6

National rank: 72

Strengths: QB Karsten Sween had some good moments last fall as a freshman and should benefit from that year of experience. The Cowboys also return their top two running backs, Wynel Seldon and Devin Moore, who combined for 1,184 rushing yards. LB Ward Dobbs is a big hitter and the best player on defense.

Weaknesses: Only two offensive line starters return, but that could be a good thing. Wyoming allowed 40 sacks last season. Defensively, the Cowboys must replace do-everything safety John Wendling.

Bottom line: The Cowboys leveled off after their 2004 win over UCLA in the Las Vegas Bowl. Wyoming is 10-13 since that game, and another nonwinning season could trigger concern about Joe Glenn's job status.

Starters back: Offense 7, defense 5

Best players: LB Ward Dobbs*, 6-0/229, Jr.; WR Michael Ford, 6-2, 203, Sr.; CB Michael Medina*, 6-0/190, Sr.; RB Wynel Seldon, 6-0/208, Jr.; QB Karsten Sween, 6-2/204, So.

Impact newcomers: WR Travis Burkhalter, 6-1/185, Fr.; G Sam Sterner, 6-4/288, RFr.; G Jack Tennant, 6-4/304, RFr.

Stadium: War Memorial (artificial, 33,000)

Site: Laramie, Wyo.

Coach: Joe Glenn (21-26, 4 years)

Offensive coordinator: Bill Cockhill (5th year)

Defensive coordinator: Mike Breske (5th year)

Last league title won: 1993 (WAC, tie)

Last bowl appearance: 2004

2006 record: 6-6, 5-3/T3rd MWC

6. COLORADO STATE

SN projection: 4-8

National rank: 82

Strengths: Experience will be the mantra for senior QB Caleb Hanie, who had his good and bad moments in the Rams' disappointing 2006 season. One

big plus is the return of RB Kyle Bell, a 1,288-yard rusher in 2005 but a no-show last year because of a serious knee injury. Colorado State returns nine starters from a defensive unit that was the strength of the team. The Rams also return P Jimmie Kaylor, who ranks among the nation's best.

Weaknesses: You wonder how much confidence this team can have after dropping its last seven games in 2006. A good start is paramount. It's questionable whether an offensive line that returns only two starters is good enough to give Bell room to run.

Bottom line: Sonny Lubick, now 70, badly wants a bounce-back season. Don't be surprised if he gets it. If Lubick can get the Rams back to a bowl, concern about his age might be appeased.

Starters back: Offense 9, defense 9

Best players: RB Kyle Bell*, 6-2/232, Jr.; QB Caleb Hanie, 6-2/236, Sr.; P Jimmie Kaylor*, 6-3/197, Sr.; DT Blake Smith*, 6-2/257, Sr.; TE Kory Sperry*, 6-6/260, Sr.

Impact newcomers: LB Curtis Cornelson, 6-3/225, Jr. (JC); LB John Clark, 6-3/225, Jr. (JC).

Stadium: Sonny Lubick Field at Hughes (artificial, 34,000)

Site: Fort Collins, Colo.

Coach: Sonny Lubick (105-65, 14 years, 17 at school; 126-84 overall, 18 years)

Offensive coordinator: Dan Hamerschmidt (7th year, 14th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Steve Stanard (5th year)

Last league title won: 2002

Last bowl appearance: 2005

2006 record: 4-8, 1-7/T8th MWC

7. SAN DIEGO STATE

SN projection: 4-8

National rank: 97

Strengths: Ten offensive starters—including battle-tested QB Kevin O'Connell and upwardly mobile RB Atiyah Henderson—return to an offense that endured a bumpy ride in 2006. K Garrett Palmer is always a plus with his strong, accurate leg.

Weaknesses: San Diego State needs drastic defensive improvement—especially against the run—to avoid another sub-.500 season, and that doesn't appear likely. The Aztecs have only four defensive players who have started more than six games and will have to battle inexperience.

Bottom line: Chuck Long came to San Diego last season and announced that the rebuilding Aztecs could win right away. He was wrong. But now the Aztecs, with a season of experience in Long's system, should show progress. If they can avoid the injuries that plagued them throughout last season, it's not unrealistic to expect a record at or around .500.

Starters back: Offense 10, defense 4

Best players: QB Kevin O'Connell, 6-6/225, Jr.; G Brandyn Dombrowski, 6-6/335, Sr.; K Garrett Palmer, 6-3/185, Jr.; LB Brett Martin, 6-0/235, Sr.; OT Will Robinson*, 6-6/280, Jr.

Impact newcomers: RB Davon Brown, 5-9/175, RFr.; SS Travis Crawford, 6-0/185, Jr. (JC).

Stadium: Qualcomm (grass, 54,000)

Site: San Diego

Coach: Chuck Long (3-9, 1 year)

Offensive coordinator: Del Miller (2nd year)

Defensive coordinator: Bob Elliott (2nd year)

Last league title won: 1986 (WAC)

Last bowl appearance: 1998

2006 record: 3-9, 3-5/T6th MWC

8. AIR FORCE

SN projection: 4-8

National rank: 104

Strengths: Shaun Carney, the most experienced QB in the Mountain West, will run a multiple offense with some elements of the old Air Force option—with, of course, a few badly needed wrinkles from new coach Troy Calhoun. Senior Chad Hall leads a promising running back corps.

Weaknesses: Air Force yielded way too many yards and points last year, and the defense must give the offense more

help. Can that happen? It can if the Falcons get strong play from several new starters, including LB Brandon Reeves and S Chris Thomas.

Bottom line: Calhoun, a former offensive coordinator for the Houston Texans, hopes to energize a ship that listed in the final seasons under legendary coach Fisher DeBerry.

Starters back: Offense 4, defense 6

Best players: QB Shaun Carney, 5-10/190, Sr.; RB Chad Hall, 5-8/180, Sr.; LB Drew Fowler*, 6-2/235, Sr.; DB Bobby Giannini, 6-2/210, Jr.; LB John Rabold, 6-4/220, Sr.

Impact newcomers: K/P Ryan Harrison, 6-1/175, Jr.; SS Chris Thomas, 5-11/198, So.

Stadium: Falcon (artificial, 46,692)

Site: Colorado Springs, Colo.

Coach: Troy Calhoun (1st year, 3rd at school)

Offensive coordinator: Tim Horton (1st year, 8th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Tim DeRuyter (1st year, 5th at school)

Last league title won: 1998 (WAC)

Last bowl appearance: 2002

2006 record: 4-8, 3-5/T6th MWC

9. UNLV

SN projection: 2-10

National rank: 114

Strengths: The good news is that 15 starters return. The bad news is 15 starters return from a 2-10 team. At least the Rebels have experienced QBs Rocky Hinds and Jarrod Jackson, a tested group of receivers and big-play linebacker Beau Bell.

Weaknesses: Coach Mike Sanford's shotgun spread has shot him in the foot more often than not in his first two seasons, and there's no reason to think things will dramatically improve. Even if the offense gets better, the defense is likely to give up a lot of points.

Bottom line: Sanford took on this reclamation project two seasons ago and has gone 4-19. It's time for him to show some progress in this gridiron wasteland, but Wisconsin, Hawaii and Nevada make the schedule a nightmare.

Starters back: Offense 7, defense 7

Best players: K Sergio Aguayo, 6-1/200, Sr.; LB Beau Bell, 6-3/245, Sr.; WR Casey Flair, 6-1/190, Jr.; DT Jeremy Geathers*, 6-2/245, Jr.; QB Rocky Hinds, 6-5/220, Jr.; WR Ryan Wolfe, 6-1/205, So.

Impact newcomers: DE Larry Dennis, 6-2/265, Jr. (JC); CB Geoff Howard, 5-10/185, Jr. (JC); OT Richie Plunkett, 6-6/290, So. (transfer, Colorado State); TB Frank Summers, 5-10/240, Jr. (JC).

Stadium: Sam Boyd (artificial, 36,800)

Site: Las Vegas

Coach: Mike Sanford (4-19, 2 years)

Offensive coordinator: Todd Berry (1st year, 2nd at school)

Defensive coordinator: Vic Shealy (3rd year); Kurt Barber (1st year, 3rd at school)

Last league title won: 1994 (tie, Big West)

Last bowl appearance: 2000

2006 record: 2-10, 1-7/T8th MWC

The WAC enters the 2007 season with its highest profile since the split that created the Mountain West in 1999.

Boise State became a national phenomenon last season by posting a 13-0 record, qualifying for a BCS bowl and beating Oklahoma in a breathtaking Fiesta Bowl. The Broncos, who finished No. 5 in the final AP poll, must replace 15 starters, but they're capable of winning their sixth straight WAC title with tailback Ian Johnson—the nation's leading scorer—and four starting linemen back.

Hawaii again will feature one of the nation's most explosive offenses. The Warriors, who beat Arizona State in a Hawaii Bowl shootout, return quarterback Colt Brennan, the league's offensive player of the year.

The WAC title—and maybe even a BCS bid—could be at stake when Boise State and Hawaii

meet Nov. 23, a Friday night, on ESPN. Heisman Trophy voters might be watching, too.

BEST PLAYERS

Colt Brennan, QB, Hawaii. He set a Division I-A record last year with an incredible 58 touchdown passes. Brennan has the quick release, instincts and accuracy that make the run-and-shoot almost impossible to stop. He also buys time with his feet.

Ian Johnson, RB, Boise State. Johnson became a household name last season because of his production (1,713 yards, 25

Brennan should put up Heisman-type numbers and make Hawaii a legit BCS threat.

CW PACK SPORTS



Honor roll

Best pregame atmosphere: Fresno State
Best home-field advantage: Boise State
Best stadium: Bulldog Stadium, Fresno State
Best fans: Boise State
Best mascot: (Pistol) Pete, New Mexico State
Strongest arm: Nick Graziano, Nevada
Most dangerous scrambler: Colt Brennan, Hawaii
Fastest running back: Yonus Davis, San Jose State
Most physical receiver: Jason Rivers, Hawaii
Surest hands: Davone Bess, Hawaii
Most dominant O-lineman: Ryan Clady, Boise State
Most disruptive end: Tyler Clutts, Fresno State
Best run-stuffing tackle: Matt Hines, Nevada
Hardest-hitting linebacker: Ezra Butler, Nevada
Best cover man: Dwight Lowery, San Jose State
Top NFL prospect: Colt Brennan, QB, Hawaii

touchdowns), toughness (he played briefly with a partially collapsed lung and returned to the field nine days after leaving the hospital), personality and fairy-tale marriage proposal after scoring the game-winning two-point conversion in the Fiesta Bowl.

Davone Bess, WR, Hawaii. The quick-cutting wideout has caught 29 touchdown passes in two seasons. His elusiveness out of the slot converts short throws into big plays.

Ryan Clady, OT, Boise State. Clady could

ASCENDING ^

New Mexico State. Coach Hal Mumme's team improved from winless in 2005 to 4-8 in 2006. The Aggies should take another step forward this season with the development of quarterback Chase Holbrook and an offense that drives defensive coordinators nuts.

DESCENDING v

Louisiana Tech. The Bulldogs' future appeared to be bright when they won a WAC championship in 2001. But overwhelming schedules and declining success on the recruiting trail have pushed them toward the cellar. New coach Derek Dooley faces a major challenge.

All-conference

Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Davone Bess, Hawaii (5-10, 195, Jr.)
WR	Chris Williams, New Mexico State (5-8, 155, Jr.)
TE	Bear Pascoe, Fresno State (6-5, 260, Jr.)
T	Ryan Clady, Boise State (6-6, 319, Jr.)
T	Tyler Miller, Louisiana Tech (6-7, 305, Sr.)
G	Cole Popovich, Fresno State (6-2, 285, Jr.)
G	Hercules Satele, Hawaii (6-2, 288, Sr.)
C	Jeff Cavender, Boise State (6-2, 286, Sr.)
QB	Colt Brennan, Hawaii (6-3, 196, Sr.)
RB	Ian Johnson, Boise State (5-11, 194, Jr.)
RB	Yonus Davis, San Jose State (5-7, 180, Sr.)

Defense

Pos.	Name, school
E	Tyler Clutts, Fresno State (6-2, 245, Sr.)
E	Ben Calderwood, Utah State (6-2, 268, Jr.)
T	Matt Hines, Nevada (6-1, 285, Sr.)
T	Michael Lafaele, Hawaii (6-0, 302, Sr.)
LB	Ezra Butler, Nevada (6-2, 248, Sr.)
LB	Matt Castelo, San Jose State (5-10, 210, Sr.)
LB	David Vobora, Idaho (6-1, 214, Sr.)
CB	Dwight Lowery, San Jose State (6-1, 185, Sr.)
CB	Kyle Wilson, Boise State (5-10, 186, So.)
S	Marty Tadman, Boise State (5-11, 182, Sr.)
S	Jacob Patek, Hawaii (6-0, 202, Sr.)

Specialists

Pos.	Name, school
K	Clint Stitzer, Fresno State (6-1, 200, Sr.)
P	Waylon Prather, San Jose State (6-3, 220, Sr.)
KR	DeAngelo Wilson, Nevada (5-10, 185, Jr.)
SN All-American	

Players of the year

Offense: Colt Brennan, QB, Hawaii
Defense: Ezra Butler, LB, Nevada

Newcomers of the year

Offense: David Richmond, WR, San Jose State
Defense: Derrell Acree, LB, Boise State

be on his way to first-round status in the NFL draft. He devours defensive linemen with his 6-6, 319-pound frame—and he's athletic enough to block in space.

Dwight Lowery, CB, San Jose State. He grabbed nine interceptions last season even though teams avoided him the second half of the year. He's a big play waiting to happen.

PLAYERS WHO MUST STEP UP

Nick Graziano, QB, Nevada. The strong-armed sophomore flashed his potential last year and figures to replace Jeff Rowe in the Pistol offense. Graziano's play could be the key to the Wolf Pack's season.

Kenny Avon, OT, Fresno State. Avon, who replaces all-conference star Chris Denman, is a converted defensive tackle who joins an offensive line that returns four starters.

Jeremy Childs, WR, Boise State. The Broncos' top three wide receivers were invited to the NFL scouting combine. The smooth Childs, who caught 22 TD passes as a high school senior and originally committed to UCLA, could become a sophomore sensation.

NEWCOMERS TO WATCH

Derrell Acrey, LB, Boise State. The energetic freshman could replace four-year starter Korey Hall in the middle. Nobody

doubts his abilities as a run stuffer and tackler. The unknown is whether he has the instincts to make the critical plays that set Hall apart.

Ryan Mathews, RB, Fresno State.

He was the nation's leading rusher last year in high school with 3,396 yards and 44 touchdowns. The quick, powerful back should help replace Dwayne Wright's 121.8 yards per game.

David Richmond, WR, San Jose State.

For a team that loses two standout receivers, this 6-4 former basketball standout offers raw athleticism. The junior college transfer has played just one full year of football. **BEST COACH**

Chris Petersen, Boise State. His 13-0 first-season record brought him national coach of the year honors. It will be interesting to see what Petersen does for an encore.

BEST STAFF

Boise State. How can anyone argue against a staff that has posted five consecutive conference championships? It just doesn't get much better than that.

ON THE HOT SEAT

Pat Hill, Fresno State. A collapse in 2005 cost the Bulldogs a WAC title, and their bowl streak ended in 2006 at seven years.

Now, for the first time in forever, they aren't considered a title threat.

GAMES TO WATCH

Boise State at Washington, Sept. 8. The Broncos probably will pack a 14-game winning streak for the trip to Seattle, where they will

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
Boise State	13-0*	9-4*	11-1*	13-1*	12-1*	58-7
Hawaii	11-3	5-7	8-5	9-5	10-4	43-24
Fresno State	4-8	8-5	9-3	9-5	9-5	39-26
Nevada	8-5	9-3*	5-7	6-6	5-7	33-28
Louisiana Tech	3-10	7-4	6-6	5-7	4-8	25-35
San Jose State	9-4	3-8	2-9	3-8	6-7	23-36
New Mexico State	4-8	0-12^	5-6	3-9	7-5	19-40
Utah State	1-11	3-8^	3-8	3-9	4-7	14-43
Idaho	4-8	2-9^	3-9	3-9	2-10	14-45

*Conference champ ^Joined conference

try to beat a BCS conference team on the road for the first time.

Southern Miss at Boise State, Sept. 27.

Two of the top non-BCS programs in the nation meet for the first time in a Thursday night ESPN showdown.

Hawaii at Nevada, Nov. 16. The Warriors walk into a trap in Reno. They must play a top team on the mainland a week before their showdown with Boise State.

Boise State at Hawaii, Nov. 23. The WAC's version of the Game of the Century will be hard-pressed to live up to its hype. Both teams will be courting the attention of Top 25 voters and major bowl scouts. Stars Colt Brennan and Ian Johnson might be trying to woo Heisman voters. It's possible a BCS berth even could be on the line.

BOWL BOUND

Boise State and Hawaii are locks. They'll win enough games, they're attractive to bowl organizers and TV networks, they boast big-name stars and, as a fallback, a bowl game is scheduled in both of their stadiums. San Jose State, Fresno State and Nevada will compete for a guaranteed third spot and possible fourth. Give Nevada and Fresno State the edge.

Recruiting buzz Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact
1. Boise State	DE Billy Winn, 6-2/266	WR Austin Pettis, 6-3/185
2. Fresno State	OL Devan Cunningham, 6-6/305	DB Sharrod Davis, 6-0/180
3. Hawaii	RB Leon Jackson, 6-2/210	DT Ray Hisatake, 6-4/320
4. New Mexico State	RB Randall Bell, 5-9/205	DB Vincent Butler, 5-11/190
5. Nevada	TE Brent Keaster, 6-5/255	LB Deantae Green, 6-2/235
6. Louisiana Tech	DE Matthew Broha, 6-4/222	WR Gabriel Bryant, 6-2/190
7. San Jose State	WR David Richmond, 6-4/200	WR Kyle Flynn, 6-2/205
8. Idaho	DE Andre Ferguson, 6-2/200	TE Jim Reuber, 6-4/250
9. Utah State	LB Deshon Benton, 5-11/220	QB Sean Setzer, 6-2/215

Rankings by Rivals.com

UNIT rankings	Backfield	Receivers	O-line	Overall	D-line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
Boise State	2	4	1	2	1	1	1	1	4	1
Fresno State	6	5	2	4	3	5	5	5	3	5
Hawaii	1	1	3	1	5	4	4	4	5	4
Idaho	8	8	7	8	8	6	6	6	8	9
Louisiana Tech	7	6	6	7	7	8	7	7	6	8
Nevada	5	3	4	3	2	2	3	2	2	3
New Mexico State	4	2	8	5	9	9	8	9	7	7
San Jose State	3	7	5	6	4	3	2	3	1	2
Utah State	9	9	9	9	6	7	9	8	9	6

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

Returning leaders

RUSHING Player, school, class	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.
1. Ian Johnson, Boise State, Jr.	12	276	1,714	6.2	59	25	142.8	4
2. Yonus Davis, San Jose State, Sr.	13	163	1,007	6.2	90	6	77.5	36
3. Patrick Jackson, Louisiana Tech, Jr.	12	170	854	5.0	65	7	71.2	56
4. Brian Flowers, Idaho, Sr.	12	128	561	4.4	36	4	46.8	-
5. Jayson Bird, Idaho, Jr.	12	137	506	3.7	14	7	42.2	-

PASSING Player, school, class	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1. Colt Brennan, Hawaii, Sr.	14	406	559	72.6	12	5,549	13.7	58	186.0	1
2. Chase Holbrook, New Mexico State, Jr.	12	397	567	70.0	9	4,619	11.6	34	155.1	2
3. Zac Champion, Louisiana Tech, Sr.	13	190	364	52.2	18	2,466	13.0	14	111.9	41
4. Adam Tafralis, San Jose State, Sr.	13	181	276	65.6	7	2,284	12.6	21	155.1	50
5. Tom Brandstater, Fresno State, Jr.	11	146	268	54.5	14	1,490	10.2	13	106.7	87

RECEIVING Player, school, class	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.
1. Davone Bess, Hawaii, Jr.	14	96	1,220	49	15	6.9	12.7	87.1	1
2. Chris Williams, New Mexico State, Jr.	12	92	1,425	96	12	7.7	15.5	118.8	2
3. Jason Rivers, Hawaii, Sr.	14	72	1,178	79	10	5.1	16.4	84.1	119
4. A.J. Harris, New Mexico State, Jr.	12	70	789	67	7	5.8	11.3	65.8	123
5. Derek Dubois, New Mexico State, Sr.	12	54	800	65	7	4.5	14.8	66.7	171

BRONCOS

SN projection **1st, 10-2, MPC Computers Bowl** National rank **22**

The Broncos enter 2007 after a classic nowhere-to-go-but-down moment: They beat Oklahoma in an unforgettable Fiesta Bowl to finish No. 5 in the final AP poll. But a powerful running game and a home-heavy schedule could put them right back into the BCS picture. The Broncos play only one '06 bowl team on the road—the season finale at Hawaii.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

The offense is like a goody bag—you never know what you'll get, but it's usually a treat. The Broncos use numerous formations, from five wide receivers to four tight ends, and are known for their creativity.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL One starter returns at an offensive skill position: tailback Ian Johnson, a legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate. At quarterback, Taylor Tharp and Bush Hamdan led a four-way spring battle that might not be resolved until August. Vinny Perretta, a multi-



Johnson

position threat, and Jeremy Childs will be asked to step up with the loss of three NFL-bound wideouts, and Ryan Putnam tops a deep rotation at tight end. The line, already the best in school history, should improve with four returning starters. The star is left tackle Ryan Clady, who is a top NFL prospect. Center Jeff Cavender and left guard Tad Miller both have started 38 straight games. Andrew Woodruff can play either guard or tackle.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Broncos tweaked their scheme last year under first-year coordinator Justin Wilcox. They switched from man-heavy to zone-heavy coverage, which confused quarterbacks and allowed them to retain their stuff-the-run priority.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Kyle Gingg and David Shields, who shared the weakside linebacker job last year, will start at the two outside spots in '07 with freshman Derrell Acrey expected to

Quick hits

Stadium: Bronco (artificial, 30,000). **Site:** Boise, Idaho
Coach: Chris Petersen (13-0, 1 year, 6 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Bryan Harsin (2nd year, 7th at school)
Defensive coordinator: Justin Wilcox (2nd year, 4th at school)

Last league title won: 2006. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2001

2006 record: 13-0, 8-0/1st WAC

Fiesta Bowl: Beat Oklahoma, 43-42, OT

Returning leaders: Rushing—Ian Johnson (277 att., 1,713 yards, 25 TDs). Passing—Taylor Tharp (11-13-1, 88 yards, 1 TD). Receiving—Vinny Perretta (17 rec., 124 yards, 2 TDs).

fill Corey Hall's big shoes in the middle. Nick Schlekeway, a grinder, and Mike T. Williams, a dynamic pass rusher, form a nice duo at end, but tackles Joe Bozickovich and Phillip Edwards will need to fill a major void. Cornerback Kyle Wilson, whose emergence late last year boosted the defense from stingy to dominant, again will pair with third-year starter Orlando Scandrick. Look for safety Marty Tadman, who has 12 career interceptions, to be joined by freshman Jason Robinson.

SPECIAL TEAMS Freshman Kyle Brotzman could win the punting and kicking jobs. The Broncos are traditionally sound on special teams, though they were mistake-prone last year.

COACHING STAFF Coach Chris Petersen begins his second season after losing offensive line coach Sean Kugler to the NFL's Buffalo Bills. Scott Huff will switch from tight ends to the offensive line, and Chris Strausser returns to Boise State to coach tight ends.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	19	Vinny Perretta (5-9, 194, Jr.)
	87	Tanyon Bissell (5-10, 189, Jr.)
TE	40	Richie Brockel (6-2, 247, So.)
	88	Chris O'Neill (6-3, 233, So.)
LT	79	Ryan Clady (6-6, 319, Jr.)
	73	Nate Potter* (6-6, 285, Fr.)
LG	66	Tad Miller (6-4, 304, Sr.)
	76	Jon Gott (6-3, 294, Jr.)
C	54	Jeff Cavender (6-2, 286, Jr.)
	68	Mitch Rudder (6-2, 292, Fr.)
RG	60	Andrew Woodruff (6-3, 331, Jr.)
	61	Jeff Biedermann (6-3, 303, Sr.)
RT	75	Dan Gore (6-5, 300, Sr.)
	72	Matt Slater (6-5, 240, Fr.)
TE	39	Ryan Putnam (6-2, 244, Sr.)
	86	Sherm Blaser (6-3, 247, Sr.)
WR	9	Jeremy Childs (6-0, 184, So.)
	21	Toshi Franklin (6-1, 178, Jr.)
QB	10	Taylor Tharp (6-2, 210, Sr.)
	3	Bush Hamdan (6-1, 196, Jr.)
RB	41	Ian Johnson (5-11, 194, Jr.)
	27	Jeremy Avery (5-9, 161, Fr.)
K	20	Kyle Brotzman (5-10, 172, Fr.)
KR	6	Rashaun Scott (5-10, 194, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
LE	97	Nick Schlekeway (6-4, 262, Sr.)
	53	Sean Bingham (6-3, 254, Jr.)
LT	67	Joe Bozickovich (6-1, 294, Jr.)
	95	Sione Tavake (6-1, 270, Sr.)
RT	90	Ian Smart (6-3, 278, Sr.)
	95	Phillip Edwards (6-4, 277, Jr.)
RE	93	Mike T. Williams (6-4, 238, Jr.)
	98	Ryan Winterswyk (6-1, 230, Fr.)
OLB	44	Kyle Gingg (5-11, 215, Jr.)
	43	David Shields (6-1, 225, Jr.)
MLB	43	David Shields (6-1, 225, Jr.)
	52	Derrell Acrey (6-2, 235, Fr.)
OLB	24	Tim Brady (6-1, 221, Jr.)
	55	Garrett Tuggle (6-1, 225, Jr.)
CB	8	Orlando Scandrick (5-11, 187, Jr.)
	1	Cade Hulbert (5-10, 165, So.)
S	37	Austin Smith (5-9, 173, Sr.)
	14	Jason Robinson (6-0, 185, Fr.)
S	20	Marty Tadman (5-11, 182, Sr.)
	38	Jeron Johnson (5-11, 190, Fr.)
CB	22	Kyle Wilson (5-10, 186, So.)
	6	Rashaun Scott (5-10, 194, Sr.)
P	20	Kyle Brotzman (5-10, 172, Fr.)
PR	20	Marty Tadman (5-11, 182, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
8-30	Weber State*	
9-8	■ at Washington	
9-15	Wyoming	17-10
9-27	Southern Miss*	
10-7	New Mexico State^	40-28
10-14	● Nevada^	38-7
10-20	at Louisiana Tech	55-14
10-26	at Fresno State^	45-21
11-3	San Jose State	23-20
11-10	at Utah State	49-10
11-17	Idaho	42-26
11-23	▲ at Hawaii^	41-34

*Thursday ^Sunday ^Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

WAC schedule strength: 5th

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QBs Taylor Tharp and Bush Hamdan. Tharp is the most experienced and knowledgeable candidate, but his arm won't scare anyone. Hamdan is a strong-armed playmaker who must prove he has a grasp of the offense.

2 MLB Derrell Acrey. The energetic freshman has patterned his approach after the man he hopes to replace: four-year starter and 2006 WAC defensive player of the year Corey Hall. He also shares Hall's passion and playmaking knack.

WARRIORS

SN projection **2nd, 8-3, Hawaii Bowl** National rank **32**

The Warriors are on the short list of BCS contenders from the five non-BCS leagues. Quarterback Colt Brennan is a Heisman Trophy candidate, three of his receivers are potential All-Americans and the schedule lacks a significant threat until the final two weeks, when Boise State and Washington visit the islands.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

The Warriors operate the run-and-shoot, a favored offense of coach June Jones. Their success last season proved the importance of the often-overlooked running game in

the pass-happy system.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL Brennan set a Division I-A record last season with 58 touchdown passes and led the nation in pass efficiency (186.0) and



Bess

Depth chart

Offense

Pos. No. Name

WR	84	Jason Rivers (6-2, 192, Sr.)
	36	Greg Salas (6-1, 186, Fr.)
WR	7	Davone Bess (5-10, 195, Jr.)
	5	Michael Washington (5-7, 165, Jr.)
LT	78	Keoni Steinhoff (6-3, 269, So.)
	64	Ray Hisatake (6-3, 328, Jr.)
LG	65	Hercules Satele (6-2, 288, Sr.)
	50	Laupepa Letuli (6-3, 287, So.)
C	77	Aaron Kia (6-4, 283, So.)
	51	Lafu Tuioti-Mariner (6-0, 279, Jr.)
RG	55	John Estes (6-2, 290, So.)
	73	Larry Saua'ea (6-2, 313, Sr.)
RT	62	Keith Ah-Soon (6-1, 294, Jr.)
	63	Brysen Ginlack (6-1, 296, Fr.)
WR	1	Ryan Grice-Mullen (5-10, 179, Jr.)
	85	Aaron Bain (5-9, 183, Jr.)
WR	19	C.J. Hawthorne (5-11, 161, Sr.)
	89	Malcolm Lane (6-1, 181, So.)
QB	15	Colt Brennan (6-3, 196, Sr.)
	6	Tyler Graunke (6-0, 202, Jr.)
RB	48	David Farmer (6-0, 231, Jr.)
	21	Kealoha Pila'ras (5-10, 187, Fr.)
K	86	Dan Kelly (6-3, 202, Jr.)
KR	89	Malcolm Lane (6-1, 181, So.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos. No. Name

E	12	Karl Noa (6-4, 238, Sr.)
	98	Francis Maka (6-1, 242, Sr.)
NT	67	Michael Lafaele (6-0, 302, Sr.)
	96	Fale Laeli (6-2, 285, Jr.)
T	93	Keala Watson (6-2, 328, Jr.)
	97	Siave Seti (6-0, 281, Sr.)
E	94	David Veikune (6-3, 258, Jr.)
	54	Amani Purcell (6-3, 257, Sr.)
LB	53	Blaze Soares (6-1, 224, So.)
	33	C.J. Allen-Jones (6-1, 224, Jr.)
LB	17	Solomon Elimimian (6-0, 224, Jr.)
	10	Timo Paepule (6-2, 255, Sr.)
LB	44	Adam Leonard (6-0, 236, Jr.)
	43	Brad Kalilimoku (5-10, 213, Sr.)
CB	23	Gerard Lewis (5-9, 168, Sr.)
	9	Ryan Keomaka (5-10, 173, Sr.)
FS	24	Desmond Thomas (6-3, 171, Jr.)
	35	Keao Monteilh (5-11, 181, Jr.)
SS	31	Jacob Patek (6-0, 202, Sr.)
	30	Dane Porlas (5-10, 179, Jr.)
CB	3	Myron Newberry (5-8, 164, Sr.)
	18	Guyton Galdeira (5-7, 163, Jr.)
P	86	Dan Kelly (6-3, 202, Jr.)
PR	3	Myron Newberry (5-8, 164, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Quick hits

Stadium: Aloha (artificial, 50,000). **Site:** Honolulu.

Coach: June Jones (64-40, 8 years, 9 at school)

Offensive coordinator: June Jones (9th year, 10th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Greg McMackin (1st year, 2nd at school)

Last league title won: 1999 (tie). **Last year not in a bowl:** 2005.

2006 record: 11-3, 7-1/2nd WAC

Hawaii Bowl: Beat Arizona State, 41-24

Returning leaders: Rushing—Colt Brennan (86 att., 366 yards, 5 TDs). Passing—Colt Brennan (406-559-12, 5,549 yards, 58 TDs). Receiving—Davone Bess (96 rec., 1,220 yards, 15 TDs).

passing yards (396.4 per game). His poise, accuracy and mobility make him an NFL prospect. His receivers make him nearly unstoppable. Jason Rivers, Ryan Grice-Mullen and Davone Bess combined for 27 catches, 484 yards and five touchdowns in the Hawaii Bowl—and they all return. This offense could score 50 points per game if it finds a reliable option at running back. Guards Hercules Satele and John Estes must hold together an inexperienced line.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Warriors return to a 4-3 under Greg McMackin, who has coordinated defenses at Hawaii, Navy, Miami, Idaho, Utah and Texas Tech in college and Seattle in the NFL. McMackin likes to attack, but not as much as predecessor Jerry Ganville did.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The Warriors are loaded at linebacker but must rebuild their front wall. Nose tackle Michael Lafaele provides a centerpiece, but the other line positions are wide open. David Veikune and Amani Purcell hope to answer questions on the edge. Inside linebackers Adam Leonard and Solomon Elimimian led the team in tackles last year. Leonard displayed star quality with four fumble recoveries, one interception and nine pass breakups. Safety Jacob Patek leads an experienced but vulnerable secondary that allowed

29 touchdown passes last year. Patek brings toughness to the back line, but cornerbacks Gerard Lewis and Myron Newberry lack the size or attitude to intimidate.

SPECIAL TEAMS Kicker Dan Kelly connected on 13-of-17 field goal attempts and ranked second in the conference in

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-8	at Louisiana Tech	61-17
9-15	at UNLV	42-13
9-22	Charleston Southern	
9-29	at Idaho	68-10
10-6	Utah State	63-10
10-12	at San Jose State*	54-17
10-27	New Mexico State	49-30
11-10	Fresno State	68-37
11-16	at Nevada*	41-34
11-23	at Boise State*	34-41
12-1	Washington	

12th game TBA

*Friday

■ Toughest game • Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

WAC schedule strength: 9th

percentage. He also kicked a 52-yarder. Kelly is the highlight of a special teams outfit that ranks in the middle of the WAC in most other categories.

COACHING STAFF Glanville took special teams coach Mouse Davis with him to Portland State. Jones, the 2006 conference coach of the year, responded by hiring McMackin, who helped Hawaii win a share of the WAC title in 1999.

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 RB David Farmer. He's the top candidate to replace Nate Ilaa, who posted 1,827 total yards and scored 18 touchdowns last year. The run-and-shoot offense is almost unstoppable with a playmaker at running back.

2 DE David Veikune. He heads a group that must step up and replace NFL draft picks Melila Purcell and Ikaika Alama-Francis, who combined for 13½ sacks and 25½ tackles for loss last season. Good luck.



NEVADA WOLF PACK

OFFENSE The Wolf Pack, hoping to enhance its high-scoring reputation, returns depth at wide receiver and running back but will have to find a new quarterback. The favorite is sophomore Nick Graziano, a strong-armed passer who gained some experience as a backup last year. Five players who caught passes return, including Mike McCoy, who scored touchdowns on nine of his 23 catches. Luke Lippincott and Brandon Frager will handle tailback duties. The versatile Dominic Green, who moves from tackle back to center, anchors an otherwise inexperienced line.

DEFENSE New co-coordinator Ken Wilson's first defense is loaded at linebacker. Super-quick all-conference outside man Ezra Butler registered seven sacks and 17½ tackles for loss in last year's 3-4 scheme. Jeremy Engstrom (outside) and Joshua Mauga (inside) also are active and fast. Nose tackle Matt Hines, nicknamed "Dump Truck" for his stocky build, is the centerpiece of the Pack's impressive run defense. Cornerback Paul Pratt needs to become a standout in the secondary. The only other returning starter in the secondary is safety Jonathon Amaya, who emerged last year as a true freshman walk-on.

SPECIAL TEAMS De'Angelo Wilson averaged 14.2 yards on 16 punt returns, and Dwayne Sanders averaged 25.0 on kick-off returns last season. Both led the league. Kicker Brett Jaekle and punter Zacary Whited are solid performers.

BOTTOM LINE Nevada should contend for its third consecutive bowl berth and its second WAC title in three years. The success of this season likely will hinge on quarterback play and two conference home games—the WAC opener against Fresno State and a November visit from Hawaii.

Quickhits

Stadium: Mackay (artificial, 29,993)
Site: Reno, Nev.
Coach: Chris Ault (185-78-1, 22 years)
Offensive coordinator: Chris Kle-nakis (4th year, 14th at school)
Defensive coordinators: Barry Sacks (4th year, 6th at school); Ken Wilson (1st year, 14th at school)
Last league title won: 2005 (tie)
Last year not in a bowl: 2004
2006 record: 8-5, 5-3/T3rd WAC
MPC Computers Bowl: Lost to Miami (Fla.), 21-20

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	■ at Nebraska	
9-8	at Northwestern	31-21
9-15	Nicholls State	
9-29	UNLV	31-3
10-6	● Fresno State	19-28
10-14	at Boise State*	7-38
10-20	at Utah State	42-0
10-27	Idaho	45-7
11-2	at New Mexico State^	48-21
11-16	▲ Hawaii^	34-41
11-24	at San Jose State	23-7
12-1	Louisiana Tech	42-0

*Sunday ^Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

WAC schedule strength: 8th

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	81	Arthur King (6-1, 195, So.)
WT	73	Alonzo Durham (6-4, 290, So.)
WG	60	Greg Hall (6-3, 285, Jr.)
C	61	Dominic Green (6-3, 295, Jr.)
SG	75	Charles Manu (6-3, 300, Sr.)
ST	62	John Bender (6-8, 320, Fr.)
TE	88	Adam Bishop (6-4, 245, Sr.)
WR	86	Jack Darlington (6-2, 190, Jr.)
WR	84	Marko Mitchell (6-4, 195, Jr.)
QB	8	Nick Graziano (6-1, 220, So.)
RB	7	Luke Lippincott (6-2, 215, Jr.)
K	13	Brett Jaekle (6-4, 210, Jr.)
KR	2	Dwayne Sanders (5-10, 175, So.)

Defense

E	94	Mundrae Clifton (6-2, 292, Jr.)
NT	57	Matt Hines (6-1, 285, Sr.)
E	48	Eric Clark (6-6, 270, Sr.)
SLB	44	Jeremy Engstrom (6-1, 247, Jr.)
MLB	31	Kevin Porter (6-1, 240, So.)
WLB	30	Joshua Mauga (6-2, 245, Jr.)
BLB	56	Ezra Butler (6-2, 248, Sr.)
CB	20	Devon Walker (6-0, 180, Sr.)
FS	49	Jonathon Amaya (6-2, 190, So.)
SS	17	Uche Anyanwu (6-4, 220, Jr.)
CB	35	Paul Pratt (5-10, 185, Jr.)
P	69	Zacary Whited (6-2, 190, Sr.)
PR	4	De'Angelo Wilson (5-10, 185, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman
SN All-conference

FRESNO STATE BULLDOGS

OFFENSE The Bulldogs must hope an infusion of youth will fix the shockingly anemic offense they put on the field last year. Tom Brandstater, who was the starting quarterback early and late, probably will lead the offense again. Two sophomores, Lonyae Miller and Anthony Harding, and true freshman Ryan Mathews will be asked to pump life into the running game. Chastin West leads a raw group of receivers. The strength of the offense is the line, where four returning starters are joined by multi-dimensional tight end Bear Pascoe.

DEFENSE End Tyler Clutts, tackle Jason Shirley and line-backer Marcus Riley are seniors who must lead this inexperienced unit. Shirley has a habit of playing to the competition—a trait the Bulldogs often exhibit. Riley was a dynamic sophomore who was slow to recover last year from a knee injury. Among the newcomers expected to make impacts are cornerback Sharrod Davis, a junior college pickup who played briefly at Oregon, and redshirt freshman linebackers Nico Heron and Robert Schenck.

SPECIAL TEAMS Clint Stitser, a dependable field goal kicker, gives the Bulldogs a field-position edge with his high, deep kickoffs. Kyle Zimmerman, who replaced injured Mike Lingua last season, will handle punting duties. West should provide a spark on kickoff returns.

BOTTOM LINE The Bulldogs need to generate confidence and momentum—not to mention appease disappointed fans—with a strong start. Problem is, they visit Texas A&M and Oregon in the first three weeks. Perhaps the Bulldogs can squeeze out enough victories to become bowl eligible, but this doesn't look like a WAC title contender.

Quickhits

Stadium: Bulldog (grass, 41,031)
Site: Fresno, Calif.
Coach: Pat Hill (76-51, 10 years, 16 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Jim McElwain (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: Dan Brown (7th year, 11th at school)
Last league title won: 1999 (tie)
Last bowl appearance: 2005
2006 record: 4-8, 4-4/5th WAC

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Sacramento State	
9-8	■ at Texas A&M	
9-15	at Oregon	24-31
9-29	Louisiana Tech	34-27
10-6	at Nevada	28-19
10-13	at Idaho	34-0
10-20	● San Jose State	14-24
10-26	▲ Boise State*	21-45
11-3	Utah State	12-13
11-10	at Hawaii	37-68
11-24	Kansas State	
11-30	at New Mexico State*	23-18

*Friday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

WAC schedule strength: 2nd

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	6	Chastin West (6-1, 215, So.)
LT	72	Bobby Lepori (6-5, 285, Jr.)
LG	62	Cole Popovich (6-2, 285, Jr.)
C	77	Ryan Wendell (6-2, 285, Sr.)
RG	76	Adam McDowell (6-4, 285, Jr.)
RT	73	Kenny Avon (6-3, 290, Jr.)
TE	85	Bear Pascoe (6-5, 260, Jr.)
WR	5	Marlon Moore (6-1, 185, So.)
QB	7	Tom Brandstater (6-5, 220, Jr.)
RB	1	Lonyae Miller (5-11, 210, So.)
FB	48	Reynard Camp (6-0, 270, So.)
K	39	Clint Stitser (6-1, 200, Sr.)
KR	6	Chastin West (6-1, 215, So.)

Defense

E	7	Jason Roberts (6-5, 250, So.)
T	42	Charles Tolbert (5-11, 265, Sr.)
NT	97	Jason Shirley (6-5, 330, Sr.)
E	11	Tyler Clutts (6-2, 245, Sr.)
SLB	32	Quadir Brown (6-2, 225, So.)
MLB	43	Ahijah Lane (6-1, 225, Sr.)
WLB	31	Marcus Riley (6-2, 240, Sr.)
CB	22	Damon Jenkins (5-11, 185, Sr.)
FS	19	Marvin Haynes (6-1, 205, So.)
SS	3	Moses Harris (6-1, 200, So.)
CB	4	Damion Owens (6-1, 190, So.)
P	35	Kyle Zimmerman (5-11, 200, Sr.)
PR	2	Clifton Smith (5-8, 195, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman
SN All-conference

				
IDAHO	LOUISIANA TECH	NEW MEXICO STATE	SAN JOSE STATE	UTAH STATE
Date Opponent	Date Opponent	Date Opponent	Date Opponent	Date Opponent
9-1 ■ at USC	9-1 Central Arkansas	8-30 SE Louisiana*	9-1 ■ at Arizona State	8-30 UNLV*
9-8 Cal Poly	9-8 Hawaii	9-8 at New Mexico	9-8 at Kansas State	9-8 at Wyoming
9-15 at Washington State	9-15 ■ at California	9-15 UTEP	9-15 at Stanford	9-15 ■ at Oklahoma
9-22 Northern Illinois	9-22 at Fresno State	9-22 ■ at Auburn	9-22 at Utah State	9-22 ▲ San Jose State
9-29 Hawaii	10-6 at Mississippi	9-29 Ark.-Pine Bluff	9-29 California-Davis	9-29 at Utah
10-6 at San Jose State	10-13 ● New Mexico St.	10-7 at Boise State*	10-6 Idaho	10-6 at Hawaii
10-13 ▲ Fresno State	10-20 Boise State	10-13 at Louisiana Tech	10-12 ▲ Hawaii*	10-20 Nevada
10-20 at New Mexico State	10-27 at Utah State	10-20 ● Idaho	10-20 at Fresno State	10-27 ● Louisiana Tech
10-27 at Nevada	11-3 at Idaho	10-27 at Hawaii	11-3 at Boise State	11-3 at Fresno State
11-3 Louisiana Tech	11-10 at LSU	11-2 ▲ Nevada*	11-10 New Mexico State	11-10 Boise State
11-17 at Boise State	11-17 ▲ San Jose State	11-10 at San Jose State	11-17 at Louisiana Tech	11-17 at New Mexico State
11-24 ● Utah State	12-1 at Nevada	11-17 Utah State	11-24 ● Nevada	11-24 at Idaho
		11-30 Fresno State*		
		*Thursday ^Sunday °Friday		
WAC schedule strength: 7th	WAC schedule strength: 1st	WAC schedule strength: 6th	WAC schedule strength: 3rd	WAC schedule strength: 4th
■ Toughest game ● Must win ▲ Best chance to pull an upset				

5. SAN JOSE STATE

SN projection: 6-6

National rank: 73

Strengths: Dick Tomey's Spartans should be efficient on offense with the return of senior QB Adam Tafalis and speedy RB Yonus Davis, who averaged 6.2 yards per carry. The defense features All-American CB Dwight Lowery, who made nine interceptions, the WAC's leading tackler in LB Matt Castello and 10 players with experience on the line. CB Christopher Owens and Lowery form the best corner duo in the conference. P Waylon Prather and K Jared Strubeck rank high among the conference's special teams performers.

Weaknesses: The Spartans lost their top three receivers and will turn to newcomers for immediate help. They also are inexperienced at both safety spots.

Bottom line: SJSU experienced a surprisingly successful 9-4 season in 2006 but had little margin for error. A schedule that begins with four straight road games, three against BCS conference teams, will leave them challenged to win seven games this year.

Starters back: Offense 7, defense 8

Best players: LB Matt Castello*, 5-10/210, Sr.; RB Yonus Davis*, 5-7/180, Sr.; CB Dwight Lowery*, 6-1/185, Sr.; P Waylon Prather*, 6-3/220, Sr.; QB Adam Tafalis, 6-2/215, Sr.

Impact newcomers: S Joe Bates, 6-1/190, Jr.; S Jonathan Harris, 6-0/195, Jr.; WR David Richmond, 6-4/200, Jr.

Stadium: Spartan (grass, 30,456)

Site: San Jose

Coach: Dick Tomey (12-12, 2 years; 170-122-3 overall, 26 years)

Offensive coordinator: Steve Morton (2nd year)

Defensive coordinator: Dave Fipp (3rd year)

Last league title won: 1990 (Big West)
Last year not in a bowl: 2005

2006 record: 9-4, 5-3/T3rd WAC

New Mexico Bowl: Beat New Mexico, 20-12

6. NEW MEXICO STATE

SN projection: 6-6

National rank: 76

Strengths: One of the WAC's most productive offenses returns QB Chase Holbrook and four players who caught at least 50 passes last season. Holbrook ranked second nationally in passing yards with 4,619 (384.9 per game). WR Chris Williams is a dynamic player who averaged 15.5 yards per catch.

Weaknesses: Hal Mumme's running game averaged a meager 75.8 yards last year, and RB Jeremiah Williams needs to become a steady threat to take pressure off Holbrook. The defensive line must improve so the 3-4 scheme can work against the run.

Bottom line: The Aggies finished strong last season, winning their last two games. If everything goes right, a winning record is within reach. More likely, the Aggies will take another step forward with five or six wins.

Starters back: Offense 9, defense 5

Best players: CB Alex Bernard, 5-8/185, Sr.; LB La'Auli Fonoti, 6-4/250, Jr.; WR AJ Harris, 6-1/195, Sr.; QB Chase Holbrook, 6-5/235, Jr.; WR/KR Chris Williams*, 5-8/155, Jr.

Impact newcomers: RB Randell Bell, 5-8/191, Fr.; PK Kyle Hughes, 6-1/190, Fr.; WR Chris West, 5-9/160, Fr.

Stadium: Aggie Memorial (grass, 30,343)

Site: Las Cruces, N.M.

Coach: Hal Mumme (4-20, 2 years; 101-84-1 overall, 15 years)

Offensive coordinator: Hal Mumme (3rd year)

Defensive coordinator: Woody Widenhofer (3rd year)

Last league title won: 1978 (Missouri Valley)

Last bowl appearance: 1960

2006 record: 4-8, 2-6/7th WAC

7. LOUISIANA TECH

SN projection: 3-9

National rank: 112

Strengths: An experienced roster and new coaching staff should breathe life

into the Bulldogs, who stumbled to a 3-10 record last year. Derek Dooley, son of Georgia legend Vince Dooley, inherits 16 returning starters. The offense should revolve around speedy RB Patrick Jackson and LB Quin Harris is the top defensive playmaker.

Weaknesses: The nation's worst Division I-A defense returns 10 starters, but they must make dramatic improvement to survive in the offensive-minded WAC. The Bulldogs, who committed a national-high 37 turnovers, play a brutal schedule with nonconference games at California, Mississippi and LSU.

Bottom line: The schedule suggests a 1-4 start—and that's before games against Boise State and LSU. The Bulldogs have talent, but they are at least a year away from respectability.

Starters back: Offense 6, defense 10

Best players: LB Quin Harris, 6-3/227, Jr.; RB Patrick Jackson, 5-10/195, Jr.; OT Tyler Miller*, 6-7/305, Sr.; TE Dennis Morris, 6-3/259, So.; DT Josh Muse, 6-3/301, Sr.

Impact newcomers: RB Myke Comp-ton, 5-9/189, Fr.; C Greg Greathouse, 6-5/253, Fr.

Stadium: Joe Aillet (grass, 30,600)

Site: Ruston, La.

Coach: Derek Dooley (1st year)

Offensive coordinator: Frank Scelfo (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Tommy Spangler (1st year)

Last league title won: 2001

Last bowl appearance: 2001

2006 record: 3-10, 1-7/T8th WAC

8. IDAHO

SN projection: 2-10

National rank: 115

Strengths: The Vandals have two premier defensive players in LB David Vobora and CB Stanley Franks, who intercepted a nation-leading nine passes. Depth at linebacker is solid, and three players with experience return to the defensive line. The offensive line, led by C Adam Korby, also is experienced.

Weaknesses: Idaho enters the season

with a new coach for the second straight year and third time in four years. Robb Akey must rebuild the passing attack with inexperienced quarterbacks and wide receivers.

Bottom line: Look for the Vandals to struggle through their eighth straight losing season. They lack a playmaker on offense and the defense, despite its star power, allowed an average of 43 points in the final five games.

Starters back: Offense 5, defense 7

Best players: RB Jayson Bird, 6-0/221, Jr.; CB Stanley Franks, 5-11/167, Sr.; S Shiloh Keo, 5-10/175, So.; C Adam Korby, 6-2/292, Jr.; LB David Vobora*, 6-1/214, Sr.

Impact newcomers: LB Andre Ferguson, 6-3/205, Fr.; RB Deonte Jackson, 5-8/181, Fr.; WR Corey Rhoane, 6-1/202, Jr.

Stadium: Kibbie Dome (artificial, 16,000)

Site: Moscow, Idaho

Coach: Robb Akey (1st year)

Offensive coordinator: Steve Axman (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Mark Criner (1st year)

Last league title won: 1998 (Big West)

Last bowl appearance: 1998

2006 record: 4-8, 3-5/6th WAC

9. UTAH STATE

SN projection: 0-12

National rank: 117

Strengths: All 11 starters return on defense. The top playmakers are LBs Jake Hutton, who missed most of last season with an injury, and Paul Igboeli, who took over for Hutton and was named WAC freshman of the year. The only offensive star is WR/KR Kevin Robinson.

Weaknesses: There is no proven quarterback or running back. The Aggies averaged just 10.8 points per game, then lost QB Riley Nelson (church mission) and RB Marcus Cross (transfer).

Bottom line: The Aggies lack offensive playmakers, which puts new coordinator Darrell Dickey in a bind. With early road games against Wyoming, Oklahoma, Utah and Hawaii, Utah State is destined for another year in the cellar.

Starters back: Offense 7, defense 11

Best players: DE Ben Calderwood*, 6-2/268, Jr.; LB Jake Hutton, 6-0/229, Jr.; LB Paul Igboeli, 6-0/206, So.; WR/KR Kevin Robinson, 6-0/192, Sr.; OL Ryan Tonnemacher, 6-3/272, Jr.

Impact newcomers: RB Jacob Atkinson, 6-0/217, Fr.; K/P Peter Caldwell, 6-4/213, Fr.; RB Derrvin Speight, 5-9/192, Fr.

Stadium: Romney (artificial, 25,513)

Site: Logan, Utah

Coach: Brent Guy (4-19, 2 years)

Offensive coordinator: Darrell Dickey (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Mark Johnson (3rd year)

Last league title won: 1997 (tie, Big West)

Last bowl appearance: 1997

2006 record: 1-11, 1-7/T8th WAC

Projected finish	
EAST	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
WEST	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Welcome to college football's version of Brigadoon, where every year another program rises majestically out of the mist to find prominence, only to sink right back into obscurity after losing in a dot-com or lawn-tool bowl game.

Out-of-the-blue teams Tulsa and UCF battled for the 2005 championship but limped noticeably through last season. Houston shook off years of mediocrity to win the 2006 title. UTEP and Memphis have been up and down as well.

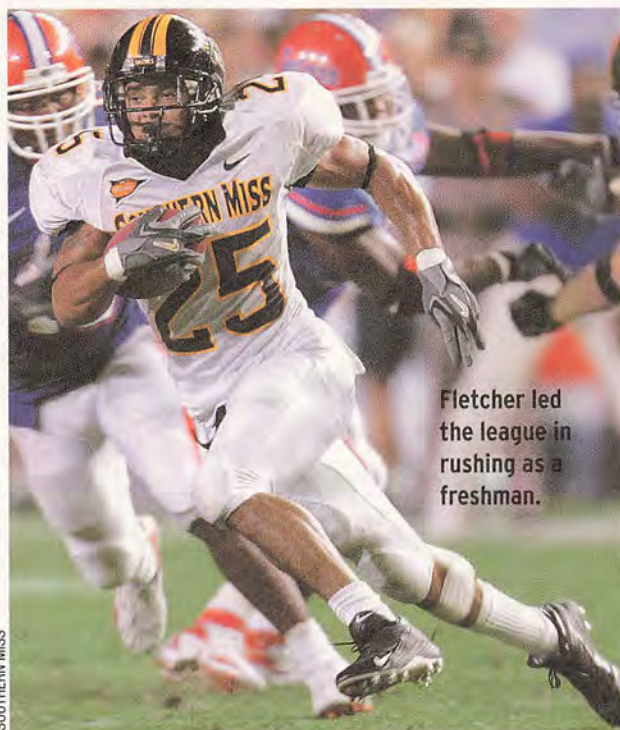
OK, mostly down.

Amid all this schizophrenia, only Southern Miss has been a constant, which the Golden Eagles proved again last season by chalking up the conference's only bowl win. And Southern Miss again projects as the league's power broker, the squad with the best talent, most consistent coach and fewest questions to answer.

Southern Miss should plow through the East with nary a challenge, and Houston, which is trying to replace a second-round NFL pick at quarterback in Kevin Kolb, will battle Tulsa and SMU for West Division supremacy.

BEST PLAYERS

Kevin Smith, RB, UCF. Last season was a



SOUTHERN MISS

Fletcher led the league in rushing as a freshman.

disappointment for the Golden Knights, but Smith wasn't. Bull-strong and relentless, Smith doesn't worry too much about running past tacklers; he prefers going over or through them.

Jarett Dillard, WR, Rice. Dillard is a clutch playmaker whose amazing hands are rivaled only by the acrobatic body control he uses to wrestle the ball away in a crowd.

Albert McClellan, DE, Marshall. The conference's defensive player of the year is a stat machine, a big-time playmaker who uses speed and technique to terrorize opponents in

their backfield. McClellan led the league in sacks (11½) and tackles for loss (19).

Anthony Alridge, RB, Houston. The Cougars need to figure out a way to get one of the fastest players in college football more touches. "Quick Six" has comic-book speed and a can't-coach-it sixth sense for eluding tacklers.

PLAYERS WHO MUST STEP UP

Blake Joseph, QB, Houston. Joseph steps into an enormous void as he attempts to replace record-setting Kevin Kolb. Joseph has to tone down his gunslinger instincts and fit into Art Briles' offensive model. With receivers Donnie Avery and Jeron Harvey easing the transition, Joseph should surpass 2,000 passing yards.

Chubb Small, RB, Marshall. Just when all

Honor roll

Best pre-game atmosphere: Southern Miss
Best home-field advantage: Southern Miss
Best stadium: Sun Bowl, UTEP
Best fans: Southern Miss
Best mascot: Marco, Marshall
Strongest arm: Justin Willis, SMU
Most dangerous scrambler: Jeremy Young, Southern Miss
Fastest running back: Anthony Alridge, Houston
Most physical receiver: Shawn Nelson, Southern Miss
Surest hands: Jarett Dillard, Rice
Most dominant O-lineman: Doug Legursky, Marshall
Most disruptive end: Albert McClellan, Marshall
Best run-stuffing tackle: Martavius Prince, Southern Miss
Hardest-hitting linebacker: Nelson Coleman, Tulsa
Best cover man: Kenneth Fontenette, Houston
Top NFL prospect: Kevin Smith, RB, UCF

All-conference

Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Jarett Dillard, Rice (5-11, 180, Jr.)
WR	Donnie Avery, Houston (5-11, 190, Sr.)
TE	Shawn Nelson, Southern Miss (6-5, 242, Jr.)
T	Chris Clark, Southern Miss (6-5, 295, Sr.)
T	Patrick Brown, UCF (6-5, 290, Jr.)
G	Jeff Akeroyd, Houston (6-3, 295, Sr.)
C	Andy Smith, Memphis (6-4, 307, Sr.)
G	Doug Legursky, Marshall (6-3, 311, Sr.)
QB	Justin Willis, SMU (6-1, 210, So.)
RB	Kevin Smith, UCF (6-1, 211, Jr.)
RB	Damion Fletcher, Southern Miss (5-10, 175, So.)

Defense

Pos.	Name, school
E	Albert McClellan, Marshall (6-2, 225, Jr.)
E	Robert Henderson, Southern Miss (6-3, 280, Sr.)
T	Martavius Prince, Southern Miss (6-3, 295, Sr.)
T	Ell Nash, Houston (6-5, 293, Jr.)
LB	Gerald McRath, Southern Miss (6-3, 213, So.)
LB	Nelson Coleman, Tulsa (6-2, 235, Sr.)
LB	Brian Raines, Rice (6-1, 220, Jr.)
CB	Kenneth Fontenette, Houston (6-0, 185, Jr.)
CB	Joe Burnett, UCF (5-11, 183, Jr.)
S	Quintin Demps, UTEP (6-1, 205, Sr.)
S	Brandon Sumrall, Southern Miss (5-11, 197, Sr.)

Specialists

Pos.	Name, school
K	Michael Torres, UCF (5-9, 229, Sr.)
P	Thomas Morstead, SMU (6-5, 215, Jr.)
KR	Anthony Alridge, Houston (5-9, 175, Sr.)
SN All-American	

Players of the year

Offense: Kevin Smith, RB, UCF
Defense: Robert Henderson, E, Southern Miss

Newcomers of the year

Offense: Fred Rouse, WR, UTEP
Defense: Rock Dennis, S, SMU

ASCENDING ^

SMU. The Mustangs have a nice stable of offensive talent—quarterback Justin Willis, wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders and running back DeMyron Martin—so if the defense can hold up, the Mustangs could land their first bowl bid since 1984.

DESCENDING v

Rice. The Owls got a lot of breaks last season, especially in three wins that were secured on their final offensive play. But after losing running back Quinton Smith and coach Todd Graham (to Tulsa), the breaks figure to even out.

the offensive planets seemed to be aligned, Ahmad Bradshaw decided to enter the NFL draft. Small, who has shown flashes of playmaking ability, now has to prove he can do it full-time, and do it as Chubb Small—not the second coming of Ahmad Bradshaw.

C.J. Ugokwe, RB, Rice. Jarett Dillard got plenty of deserved attention last year, but Quinton Smith was a workhorse, rushing for 1,096 yards and logging 211 of 231 carries by Rice running backs. Ugokwe obviously can't replace all that Smith provided, but 10 or 15 carries and 75 or so yards per game would suffice.

NEWCOMERS TO WATCH

Fred Rouse, WR, UTEP. With the departure of Johnnie Lee Higgins, the Miners need to find a big, physical receiver. And Rouse, a talented transfer from Florida State, has the size (6-3, 195) and skills to step right in and be a playmaker.

Dion Toliver, WR, Tulsa. After losing most of their key receivers, the Golden Hurricane expect junior college transfer Toliver to step right in and provide a much-needed

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
Southern Miss	9-5	7-5	7-5	9-4*	7-6	39-25
Marshall	5-7	4-7^	6-6	8-4	11-2	34-26
Houston	10-4*	6-6	3-8	7-6	5-7	31-31
Tulsa	8-5	9-4^	4-8	8-5	1-11	30-33
Memphis	2-10	7-5	8-4	9-4	3-9	29-32
UAB	3-9	5-6	7-5	5-7	5-7	25-34
UTEP	5-7	8-4^	8-4	2-11	2-10	25-36
Tulane	4-8	2-9	5-6	5-7	8-5	24-35
UCF	4-8	8-5^	0-11	3-9	7-5	22-38
Rice	7-6	1-10^	3-8	5-7	4-7	20-38
East Carolina	7-6	5-6	2-9	1-11	4-8	19-40
SMU	6-6	5-6^	3-8	0-12	3-9	17-41

*Conference champ ^Joined conference

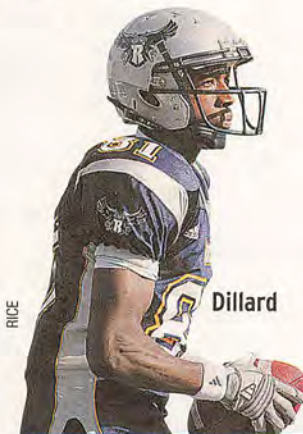
ed primary target for Paul Smith, one of the top quarterbacks in the conference.

Rock Dennis, S, SMU. The loss of Joe Sturdivant, a four-year starter, will be felt in more areas than the stat book. Dennis, a junior college cornerback, will be showing off his playmaking skills at safety.

BEST COACH

Todd Graham, Tulsa. Loyalty might be an issue with Graham, but nobody can question his coaching ability. The man took Rice to a bowl game last season in his first and last year at the school. Yes, that Rice.

Need we say more?



RICE

Dillard

Recruiting buzz Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact
1. Southern Miss	RB Antwan Easterling, 5-11/195	WR Johndrick Morris, 6-3/190
2. UCF	WR Alphonso Bryant, 6-0/190	QB Michael Greco, 6-3/220
3. East Carolina	RB Jonathan Williams, 6-0/190	CB Tyrell Worthington, 6-0/180
4. Marshall	QB Chris Smith, 6-3/220	RB Jo Jo Cox, 5-9/213
5. UTEP	DE Jason Boyce, 6-4/245	WR Russell Carr, 6-1/190
6. Houston	RB/DB Justin Johnson, 6-1/208	C Naseri Eteuini, 6-4/305
7. Memphis	WR Cam Baker, 6-0/163	DT Freddie Barnett, 6-1/290
8. Tulsa	RB Charles Opeseyitan, 5-10/186	WR/DB A.J. Whitmore, 5-9/190
9. SMU	WR/DB De'Von Bailey, 6-2/200	WR Bradley Haynes, 6-2/195
10. Rice	S Joseph Leary, 6-1/180	TE Kody Emmert, 6-6/230
11. UAB	RB Darrell Norman, 5-9/190	S Marquis Coleman, 5-11/180
12. Tulane	QB Joe Kemp, 6-4/212	K Robbie Broach, 6-0/180

Rankings by Rivals.com

UNIT rankings	Backfield	Receivers	O-line	Overall	D-line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
East Carolina	11	12	11	11	7	8	12	11	12	10
Houston	3	2	3	1	2	4	5	2	5	5
Marshall	9	9	2	9	4	7	7	5	3	7
Memphis	6	4	7	7	8	6	11	9	11	11
Rice	10	1	4	4	10	5	10	10	7	9
SMU	5	6	1	2	11	2	3	4	2	8
Southern Miss	1	5	10	5	1	1	2	1	8	2
Tulane	8	10	9	10	5	10	9	7	4	4
Tulsa	4	7	8	8	3	3	8	3	6	1
UAB	12	11	12	12	9	9	6	8	9	12
UCF	2	8	5	3	6	12	1	6	1	3
UTEP	7	3	6	6	12	11	4	12	10	6

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

BEST STAFF

UCF. George O'Leary added experienced hands John Skladany (defensive coordinator), Earnest Collins (defensive backs), Jim Panagos (defensive line) and David Kelly (wide receivers) to a staff already deep in talented coaches.

ON THE HOT SEAT

Mike Price, UTEP. Price made a big splash in his first two seasons, but the Miners inexplicably crashed last year, finishing 5-7. Now without quarterback Jordan Palmer and wide receiver Johnnie Lee Higgins, things could get rough.

GAMES TO WATCH

Southern Miss at Marshall, Oct. 21. After three weeks on the road, the Herd will come home to face the East's top team. We'll see if Marshall is for real.

SMU at Houston, Nov. 4. The Mustangs end a make-or-break stretch of three road games in four weeks—at Southern Miss, Tulsa and Houston.

Houston at Tulsa, Nov. 10. What has become a grudge match also could be a showdown for the West Division title.

UTEP at UCF, Nov. 24. Bowl bids could be on the line for both teams in the regular-season finale.

BOWL BOUND

Houston, Southern Miss, Tulsa and SMU (if it can survive a tough midseason stretch of road games) should be penciled in for postseason bids. Memphis also could return from the dead, especially with seven home games and a pillow-soft nonconference schedule, but the Tigers are a long shot.

Returning leaders

RUSHING Player, school, class	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.
1. Damien Fletcher, Southern Miss, So.	13	276	1,388	5.0	36	11	106.8	12
2. Anthony Alridge, Houston, Sr.	14	95	959	10.1	87	8	68.5	43
3. Kevin Smith, UCF, Jr.	9	206	934	4.5	34	7	103.8	46
4. Joseph Doss, Memphis, Sr.	12	224	910	4.1	32	7	75.8	49
5. Matt Forte, Tulane, Sr.	9	163	859	5.3	64	8	95.4	55

PASSING Player, school, class	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1. Paul Smith, Tulsa, Sr.	13	233	350	66.6	9	2,727	11.7	15	141.0	27
2. Martin Hankins, Memphis, Sr.	12	226	377	59.9	13	2,550	11.3	18	125.6	36
3. Justin Willis, SMU, So.	11	182	270	67.4	6	2,047	11.2	26	158.4	65
4. Jeremy Young, Southern Miss, Sr.	14	161	281	57.3	6	1,769	11.0	12	120.0	79
5. Chase Clement, Rice, Jr.	8	153	265	57.7	5	1,707	11.2	21	134.2	—

RECEIVING Player, school, class	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.
1. Jarett Dillard, Rice, Jr.	13	91	1,247	65	21	7.0	13.7	95.9	13
2. Donnie Avery, Houston, Sr.	14	57	852	56	5	4.1	14.9	60.9	158
3. Emmanuel Sanders, SMU, So.	12	46	605	56	9	3.8	13.2	50.4	—
4. Cody Slate, Marshall, So.	12	43	684	75	6	3.6	15.9	57.0	—
5. Duke Calhoun, Memphis, So.	12	42	681	60	6	3.5	16.2	56.8	—



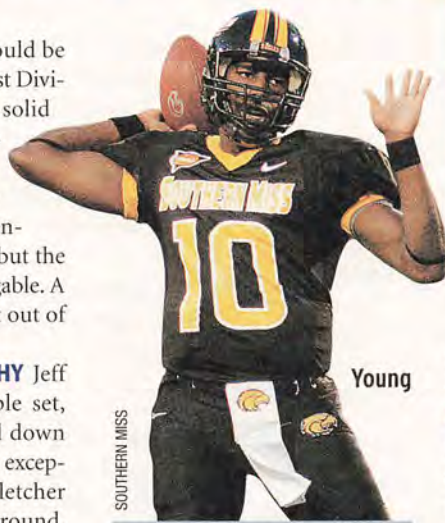
SOUTHERN MISS

GOLDEN EAGLES

SN projection 9-3, 1st, Liberty Bowl **National rank** 24

Southern Miss should be the class of the East Division with its solid offense and deep, talented defense. The non-conference schedule has tough trips to Tennessee and Boise State, but the conference slate is navigable. A 10-victory season is not out of the question.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Jeff Bower, using a multiple set, will try to ram the ball down opponents' throats with exceptional back Damion Fletcher eating up most of the ground. The Golden Eagles can throw when they have to, but they much prefer controlling the clock with their running game. **OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL** It all starts with Fletcher, the elusive sophomore who ran for 1,388 yards and 11 touchdowns last season. Fletcher runs behind fullback Marcus Raines, a converted linebacker who also clears running room for backup Tory Harrison. Inconsistent Jeremy Young returns at quarterback and needs only to pass



SOUTHERN MISS

Young

often enough to divert attention away from Fletcher. Tight end Shawn Nelson is the top playmaker among receivers, though Chris Johnson has potential. Opening holes for Fletcher could be problematic. The Golden Eagles lose three starters off a line that will rebuild around two strong tackles, Chris Clark and Ryan McKee. Rick Thompson is projected to start at center.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Golden Eagles employ a 4-3 built around speed. Southern Miss surrendered only 18.6 points and 308 yards per game last season, numbers that should be mirrored this year.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL The conference's deepest linebacking unit returns intact with Gerald McRath, Tokumbo Abanikanda and James Denley wreaking havoc behind an equally fortified front wall that features tackles Martavius Prince and Sean Merrill and end Robert Henderson. The weakness figures to be on the corners, where Eddie

Quick hits

Stadium: M.M. Roberts (artificial, 33,000)

Site: Hattiesburg, Miss.

Coach: Jeff Bower (112-77-1, 16 years, 25 at school)

Offensive coordinator: Jay Johnson (3rd year, 5th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Jay Hopson (3rd year, 6th at school)

Last league title won: 2003. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2001.

2006 record: 9-5, 6-2/1st C-USA East

Conference USA championship game: Lost to Houston, 34-20

GMAC Bowl: Beat Ohio, 28-7

Returning leaders: Rushing—Damion Fletcher (276 att., 1,388 yards, 11 TDs). Passing—Jeremy Young (161-281-6, 1,769 yards, 12 TDs). Receiving—Shawn Nelson (36 rec., 506 yards, 3 TDs).

Willingham and Michael McGee are promising but inexperienced. Not so with LeVance Richmond and Brandon Sumrall, who form one of the most explosive safety duos in the conference.

SPECIAL TEAMS The job of replacing Darren McCaleb, the school's all-time field goal, extra points and scoring leader, could go to Britt Barefoot, who also will handle punting for a second straight year. Look for Sumrall or Ralph Turner to return kick-

offs though a new punt return man must be found.

COACHING STAFF Bower, who has strung together 13 straight winning seasons and taken the Golden Eagles to bowls in nine of the last 10 years, had to patch up the staff when running backs coach Derrick Nix took a job with the Atlanta Falcons. Courtney Messingham moved into that vacancy, and Mike Grant was hired from Iowa State to replace Messingham as receivers coach.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	26	Ed Morgan (5-9, 160, Jr.)
	84	Rodney Gray (6-3, 180, So.)
LT	75	Chris Clark (6-5, 295, Sr.)
	74	Nick Dean (6-3, 282, Sr.)
LG	76	Wesley Housley (6-2, 293, Jr.)
	78	Johnathan Landor (6-2, 285, Sr.)
C	74	Rick Thompson (6-0, 275, Jr.)
	72	Cameron Zipp (6-1, 285, Fr.)
RG	71	Ryan Hebert (6-5, 307, So.)
	69	Micah Brown (6-2, 275, So.)
RT	66	Ryan McKee (6-6, 275, Jr.)
	67	Dwayne Paulin (6-7, 280, Sr.)
TE	1	Shawn Nelson (6-5, 242, Jr.)
	7	Derek Chapman (6-4, 250, Sr.)
WR	87	Chris Johnson (6-0, 176, Sr.)
	84	Rodney Gray (6-3, 180, So.)
QB	10	Jeremy Young (6-3, 218, Sr.)
	12	Stephen Reeves (6-1, 205, Sr.)
RB	35	Damion Fletcher (5-10, 175, So.)
	11	Tory Harrison (6-1, 187, So.)
FB	34	Marcus Raines (6-3, 246, Sr.)
	31	Josh Barton (5-11, 225, So.)
K	3	Britt Barefoot (6-0, 180, Jr.)
KR	82	Ralph Turner (5-8, 171, Fr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	92	Eric Phillips (6-7, 291, Jr.)
	90	David Boyce (6-6, 243, Fr.)
NT	99	Sean Merrill (6-3, 294, Sr.)
	95	Anthony Gray (6-0, 316, Fr.)
T	97	Martavius Prince (6-3, 295, Sr.)
	96	Chris J. Johnson (6-1, 288, Sr.)
E	91	Robert Henderson (6-3, 280, Sr.)
	45	Roshaad Byrd (6-3, 247, So.)
SLB	22	James Denley (6-2, 238, Sr.)
	32	Martez Smith (6-0, 205, Fr.)
MLB	24	Gerald McRath (6-3, 213, So.)
	46	Jerome Lyons (6-1, 225, Sr.)
WLB	41	Tokumbo Abanikanda (6-0, 218, Jr.)
	58	Brandon Davis (6-1, 208, So.)
CB	28	Michael McGee (5-10, 181, So.)
	17	Ivory Bradshaw (6-1, 189, Jr.)
FS	15	LeVance Richmond (5-11, 195, Sr.)
	18	Eddie Hicks (6-2, 183, So.)
SS	6	Brandon Sumrall (5-11, 197, Sr.)
	26	Justin Wilson (5-11, 185, Fr.)
CB	23	Eddie Willingham (5-10, 175, Jr.)
	19	Greg Wingfield (6-1, 175, Fr.)
P	3	Britt Barefoot (6-0, 180, Jr.)
PR	87	Chris Johnson (6-0, 176, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Tennessee-Martin	
9-8	■ at Tennessee	
9-15	■ at East Carolina	17-20
9-27	at Boise State*	
10-3	Rice^	
10-13	SMU	
10-21	● at Marshall^	42-7
10-28	UCF^	19-14
11-3	at UAB	25-20
11-10	Memphis	42-21
11-17	▲ at UTEP	
11-24	Arkansas State	

*Thursday ^Wednesday ^ Sunday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to be upset

C-USA schedule strength: 1

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 K Britt Barefoot. Darren McCaleb, a four-year starter, departed as the school's career scoring leader. Barefoot, who hopes to double as the kicker and punter, has—dare we say it—big shoes to fill.

2 CB Michael McGee. Playing behind Caleb Hendrix and Jasper Faulk last season, McGee got most of his freshman baptism on special teams. Now he will get a different kind of baptism as a first-year starter on the corner.

				
EAST CAROLINA	MARSHALL	MEMPHIS	UAB	UCF
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
9-1 at Virginia Tech	9-1 at Miami	9-1 at Mississippi	9-1 at Michigan State	9-1 at N.C. State
9-8 North Carolina	9-8 at West Virginia	9-8 at Arkansas State	9-8 at Florida State	9-15 Texas
9-15 at Southern Miss	9-15 New Hampshire	9-15 Jacksonville State	9-15 Alcorn State	9-22 Memphis
9-22 at West Virginia	9-22 at Cincinnati	9-22 at UCF	9-29 at Tulsa	9-29 La-Lafayette
9-29 at Houston	10-2 at Memphis*	10-2 Marshall*	10-6 at Mississippi State	10-6 at East Carolina
10-6 UCF	10-13 at Tulsa	10-13 Middle Tennessee	10-13 Tulane	10-13 at South Florida
10-13 at UTEP	10-21 at Southern Miss^	10-20 at Rice	10-20 Houston	10-20 Tulsa
10-20 N.C. State	10-27 Rice	10-27 at Tulane	10-27 at East Carolina	10-28 at Southern Miss*
10-27 UAB	11-3 at UCF	11-3 East Carolina	11-3 at Southern Miss	11-3 Marshall
11-3 at Memphis	11-10 at East Carolina	11-10 at Southern Miss	11-10 UCF	11-10 at UAB
11-10 at Marshall	11-17 at Houston	11-17 UAB	11-17 at Memphis	11-17 at SMU
11-24 Tulane	11-24 UAB	11-24 SMU	11-24 at Marshall	11-24 UTEP
	*Tuesday ^Sunday	*Tuesday		*Sunday
C-USA schedule strength: 9th	C-USA schedule strength: 2nd	C-USA schedule strength: 11th	C-USA schedule strength: 4th	C-USA schedule strength: 7th

■ Toughest game ● Must win ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

2. UCF

SN projection: 6-6, New Orleans Bowl
National rank: 69

Strengths: Coach George O'Leary loves to control the clock with his up-the-middle running game, and UCF should be able to do that with workhorse RB Kevin Smith (934 yards in nine games) operating behind a line that returns four starters, including G Kyle Smith (converting to center) and tackles Patrick Brown and Josh Sitton.

Weaknesses: The defense allowed 28.8 points and 398.1 yards per game last year and forced only 12 turnovers. O'Leary thinks those numbers will improve with nine returning starters and a host of new defensive coaches, including coordinator John Skladany.

Bottom line: The Golden Knights are reasonably confident the offense will perform well enough to keep the defense rested. If the defense improves as much as expected, seven wins are possible; if not, 5-7 will be more likely.

Starters back: Offense 8, defense 9
Best players: OT Patrick Brown*, 6-5/290, Jr.; CB Joe Burnett*, 5-11/183, Jr.; RB Kevin Smith*, 6-1/211, Jr.; C Kyle Smith, 6-2/305, Sr.; K Michael Torres*, 5-9/229, Sr.

Impact newcomers: DB Darin Baldwin, 5-11/191, Fr.; DB Alphonso Bryant, 6-0/190, Fr.; QB Michael Greco, 6-3/220, So. (JC).

Stadium: Bright House Networks (grass, 45,000)

Site: Orlando

Coach: George O'Leary (12-24, 3 years; 64-57 overall, 10 years)

Offensive coordinator: Tim Salem (4th year)

Defensive coordinator: John Skladany (1st year)

Last league title won: None

Last bowl appearance: 2005

2006 record: 4-8, 3-5/4th C-USA East

3. MARSHALL

SN projection: 6-6

National rank: 77

Strengths: The interior of an offensive

line anchored by superb C Doug Legursky returns intact. Legursky, who did not allow a sack last season, is flanked by Brian Leggett and David Ziegler. The Herd, which averaged 167 rushing yards per game, also returns Cody Slate, who is being touted as one of the best tight ends in the country.

Weaknesses: New coordinator Steve Dunlap will try to patch a defense that allowed 29.2 points and 391 yards per game. Priority No. 1 is finding two replacements on the front line to help DE Albert McClellan, the conference's defensive player of the year.

Bottom line: The Herd took a hit when RB Ahmad Bradshaw entered the NFL draft a year early, but if either veteran Chubb Small or freshman Darius Marshall can live up to billing, things might not be so bleak. Look for a .500 finish.

Starters back: Offense 7, defense 7

Best players: MLB Josh Johnson, 6-2/250, Jr.; C Doug Legursky*, 6-3/311, Sr.; DE Albert McClellan*, 6-2/225, Jr.; TE Cody Slate, 6-4/225, So.; WR/PR Emmanuel Spann, 5-11/179, Jr.

Impact newcomers: RB Darius Marshall, 5-10/188, Fr.; WR Darius Passmore, 6-3/180, Jr.; TE Lee Smith, 6-6/245, So. (transfer, Tennessee).

Stadium: Joan C. Edwards (artificial, 38,049)

Site: Huntington, W.Va.

Coach: Mark Snyder (9-14, 2 years)

Offensive coordinator: Larry Kueck (3rd year, 7th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Steve Dunlap (1st year)

Last league title won: 2002 (MAC)

Last bowl appearance: 2004

2006 record: 5-7, 4-4/3rd C-USA East

4. EAST CAROLINA

SN projection: 5-7

National rank: 93

Strengths: The defense loses only four starters from a unit that made 16 interceptions and allowed only 329 yards and 20.8 points per game. The biggest plus is a linebacking unit—Quentin Cotton, Fred Wilson and Pierre Bell—that

might be the best in the conference.

Weaknesses: The Pirates will struggle to score, especially early in the season, after losing most of their top skill-position players. The rebuilding begins with RB/WR Chris Johnson and four returning starters on an offensive line anchored by tackle Josh Coffman.

Bottom line: It appears to be a transition year for the Pirates, but if they survive the first five games—a stretch that includes Virginia Tech, Southern Miss, West Virginia and Houston—a bowl isn't out of the question.

Starters back: Offense 5, defense 7

Best players: LB Pierre Bell, 6-2/238, Jr.; OT Josh Coffman, 6-7/300, Sr.; LB Quentin Cotton, 6-2/224, Jr.; RB/WR Chubb Small, 5-11/200, Sr.; LB Fred Wilson, 6-2/250, Sr.

Impact newcomers: TE J.R. Kraemer, 6-5/237, Jr. (transfer, Illinois); DT Khalif Mitchell, 6-6/320, Jr. (transfer, North Carolina).

Stadium: Dowdy-Ficklen (grass, 43,000)

Site: Greenville, N.C.

Coach: Skip Holtz (12-12, 2 years)

Offensive coordinator: Todd Fitch (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Greg Hudson (3rd year)

Last league title won: 1976 (Southern)

Last year not in a bowl: 2005

2006 record: 7-6, 5-3/2nd C-USA East

PapaJohns.com Bowl: Lost to South Florida, 24-7

5. MEMPHIS

SN projection: 4-8

National rank: 102

Strengths: The Tigers have a deep offensive line that coach Tommy West is challenging to be more physical. T Brandon Pearce and G Andy Smith are the go-to blockers for RB Joseph Doss.

Weaknesses: The secondary has to be rebuilt after losing Brandon McDonald, Wesley Smith and Dustin Lopez. Two transfers, Dontae Reed (Mississippi) and Tony Bell (Auburn), are expected to make immediate contributions.

Bottom line: It could be another long

year for Memphis, which retooled its staff. There are six new assistants, including new coordinators Rick Kravitz (defense) and Clay Helton (offense).

Starters back: Offense 7, defense 7

Best players: WR Duke Calhoun, 6-4/185, So.; RB Joseph Doss, 5-9/196, Sr.; QB Martin Hankins, 6-2/205, Sr.; OT Brandon Pearce, 6-6/280, Jr.; G Andy Smith*, 6-4/307, Sr.

Impact newcomers: NG Freddie Barnett, 6-2/300, Jr. (JC); WR Steven Black, 6-3/208, Jr. (JC); S Dontae Reed, 6-2/210, Jr. (transfer, Mississippi).

Stadium: Liberty Bowl Memorial (artificial, 62,380)

Site: Memphis

Coach: Tommy West (34-38, 6 years; 69-73 overall, 12 years)

Offensive coordinator: Clay Helton (1st year, 8th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Rick Kravitz (1st year)

Last league title won: 1971 (Missouri Valley)

Last bowl appearance: 2005

2006 record: 2-10, 1-7/6th C-USA East

6. UAB

SN projection: 3-9

National rank: 110

Strengths: Although the line took a few hits, the defense should be solid with mobile, hard-hitting LBs Joe Henderson and Kris Guyton patrolling the middle. Also look for the Blazers to be better conditioned and more disciplined after an offseason of intense physical workouts.

Weaknesses: Ball control might be a problem for new coach Neil Callaway because the Blazers lost three starting linemen and four backs from last year's anemic offense. Former slot receiver Rashad Slaughter will get a chance to use his playmaking skills as a tailback.

Bottom line: The Blazers lost a lot and play four of their first five games on the road. Confidence could be an issue. They do feel better at quarterback with Joseph Webb, who played well late last season. Sam Hunt is coming off back surgery and also might be in the mix.

Starters back: Offense 4, defense 4

Best players: FS Will Dunbar, 6-1/195, Sr.; LB Kris Guyton, 6-3/230, Jr.; LB Joe Henderson, 6-2/220, Jr.; DE Brandon Jeffries, 6-4/250, Sr.; CB Kevin Sanders, 5-11/185, Jr.; TB/WR Rashad Slaughter, 5-9/185, So.

Impact newcomers: RB Aaron Johns, 5-10/190, Jr. (JC); DL Antonio Forbes, 6-4/265, Jr. (JC); RB Darell Norman, 5-10/195, Fr.

Stadium: Legion Field (artificial, 72,000)

Site: Birmingham, Ala.

Coach: Neil Callaway (1st year)

Offensive coordinator: Kim Helton (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Eric Schumann (1st year)

Last league title won: None

Last bowl appearance: 2004

2006 record: 3-9, 2-6/5th C-USA East



HOUSTON

COUGARS

SN projection 1st, 8-4, Armed Forces Bowl National rank 42

The Cougars have enough talent returning to win the West. The question is whether guys will step up and make plays and provide leadership—areas where Houston will miss star quarterback Kevin Kolb the most.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Art Briles' offense is unconventional, but it relies on a simple principle—use a quick-hitting passing game to get fast players out in space. The Cougars should use the running game more with Anthony "Quick Six" Alridge igniting the attack.

OFFENSIVE PERSONNEL The team has options to replace Kolb, but they are untested. Blake Joseph completed six of eight passes last season as Kolb's backup, and Case Keenum was impressive in spring practice. The good news: Wideouts Jeron Harvey and Donnie Avery and tight end Mark Hafner are solid targets. The star, though, will be the speedy Alridge, who racked up 959 yards on 95 carries last season and almost certainly will get more touches this year. The



Alridge

HOUSTON

line loses all-conference center Sterling Doty, but the Cougars believe Carl Barnett—a backup defensive end last season—has the skills to be an excellent center. The rest of the line is a bit of a patchwork because of the losses of SirVincent Rogers (knee) and Byron Alfred (law school), but it could surprise.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY The Cougars had been using a speed-first 3-4 alignment, but when Alan Weddell took over the defense last year he began tinkering with a 4-2-5, which the Cougars will use more often this season.

DEFENSIVE PERSONNEL Eli Ash can create havoc at tackle and Phillip Hunt provides speed and a mean streak. When the Cougars go to the 4-2-5, outside linebacker Brendan Pahulu will drop down to end. Cody Lubojasky in the middle and Trent Allen on the weakside aren't fast. Stephen James, Broderick Bean and James Francis, though, give the

Quick hits

Stadium: Robertson (grass, 32,000). **Site:** Houston
Coach: Art Briles (26-24, 4 years)
Offensive coordinator: Art Briles (5th year)
Defensive coordinator: Alan Weddell (2nd year, 3rd at school)

Last league title won: 2006. **Last year not in a bowl:** 2004.

2006 record: 10-4, 7-1/1st C-USA West

Conference USA championship game: Beat Southern Miss, 34-20

Liberty Bowl: Lost to South Carolina, 44-36

Returning leaders: Rushing—Anthony Alridge (95 att., 959 yards, 8 TDs). Passing—Blake Joseph (6-8-1, 56 yards, 0 TDs). Receiving—Donnie Avery (57 rec., 852 yards, 5 TDs).

Cougars the fast, hard-hitting rovers that were missing in last year's furtive stabs at the 4-2-5. Cornerback Kenneth Fontenette is the most gifted guy in a secondary that lost a lot of talent and leaderships. He is versatile, intelligent and athletic. Rocky Schwartz, a punishing tackler, and Ernest Miller, an athlete with uncanny timing, are candidates at strong safety. Free safety Joseph Gonzales returns after missing four games with shoulder problems.

SPECIAL TEAMS The return game is in good hands, with Avery and Alridge handling kickoffs. Teric Williams and Randall Antoine will return punts. Punting (114th ranking in net yards last season) must improve in a big way. Kicker Ben Bell was accurate (14 of 18) if not long (42-yard best).

COACHING STAFF George Pugh (receivers) and Bubba McDowell (safeties) are new. Both are experienced and should make a smooth transition.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	1	Jeron Harvey (6-5, 215, Sr.)
	24	Tim Monroe (6-2, 185, So.)
LT	79	Matt Hart (6-6, 305, So.)
	59	Sebastian Vollmer (6-8, 290, Jr.)
LG	77	Jeff Akeroyd (6-3, 295, Sr.)
	69	Jerrold Butler (6-2, 330, So.)
C	57	Carl Barnett (6-2, 285, So.)
	55	Matt Parker (6-2, 265, Fr.)
RG	64	Michael Bloesch (6-2, 295, Jr.)
	66	Jared Lindsey (6-3, 280, Fr.)
RT	73	Dustin Dickinson (6-3, 290, Sr.)
	52	Jordan Shoemaker (6-3, 275, Fr.)
TE	87	Mark Hafner (6-3, 230, Jr.)
	18	Wesley Scourten (6-6, 225, Fr.)
WR	8	Chris Gilbert (5-9, 175, So.)
	9	Perry McDaniel (5-9, 175, Sr.)
WR	2	Donnie Avery (5-11, 190, Sr.)
	5	Brennan Gleason (6-0, 195, Jr.)
QB	15	Blake Joseph (6-2, 215, So.)
	7	Case Keenum (6-1, 205, Fr.)
RB	22	Anthony Alridge (5-9, 175, Sr.)
	29	Randall Antoine (5-10, 190, Fr.)
K	14	Ben Bell (6-0, 175, Jr.)
KR	22	Anthony Alridge (5-9, 175, Sr.)

SN All-conference

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
NT	56	Cody Pree (6-3, 290, Jr.)
	91	Tate Stewart (6-3, 285, Jr.)
T	90	Eli Ash (6-5, 293, Jr.)
	92	Billy Hartford (6-2, 260, So.)
E	53	Phillip Hunt (6-2, 250, Jr.)
	93	Brian West (6-4, 265, So.)
OLB	3	Brendan Pahulu (6-3, 239, Sr.)
	33	Shomari Williams (6-2, 245, So.)
MLB	34	Cody Lubojasky (6-3, 230, Jr.)
	4	Rodney Rideau (6-1, 230, Jr.)
WLB	41	Trent Allen (6-2, 244, Sr.)
	4	Rodney Rideau (6-1, 230, Jr.)
OLB	27	Stephen James (5-10, 205, Jr.)
	1	James Francis (6-1, 215, Jr.)
CB	8	Quinte Williams (5-11, 170, Jr.)
	23	Carson Blackmon (5-11, 180, So.)
FS	9	Joseph Gonzales (5-11, 200, Sr.)
	21	Brandon Brinkley (6-0, 175, So.)
SS	5	Ernest Miller (6-0, 195, Jr.)
	20	Rocky Schwartz (5-10, 200, Sr.)
CB	28	Kenneth Fontenette (6-0, 185, Jr.)
	6	Kellan Yancy (6-0, 185, Sr.)
P	45	Tommy Skinner (6-4, 215, Fr.)
PR	16	Teric Williams (5-10, 180, Fr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	▲ at Oregon	
9-15	at Tulane	45-7
9-22	Colorado State	
9-29	East Carolina	
10-6	■ at Alabama	
10-13	Rice	31-30
10-20	at UAB	
10-27	at UTEP	34-17
11-4	SMU*	37-27
11-10	● at Tulsa	27-10
11-17	Marshall	
11-24	Texas Southern	

*Sunday

■ Toughest game ● Must win

▲ Best chance to pull an upset






C-USA schedule strength: 6th

2-POINT conversion

GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 QB Blake Joseph. The strong-armed—and headstrong—Joseph isn't a polished product, but he has the talent and the arm to succeed, and his teammates believe in him.

2 OLB Stephen James. There has been a buzz around James since he transferred from Oklahoma State—about how hard he hits and what a take-charge guy he is. The Cougars need to see both this year.

				
RICE	SMU	TULANE	TULSA	UTEP
Date Opponent	Date Opponent	Date Opponent	Date Opponent	Date Opponent
9-1 Nicholls State	9-3 ▲ Texas Tech*	9-8 Mississippi State	8-30 at La.-Monroe*	9-1 New Mexico
9-8 at Baylor	9-8 North Texas	9-15 Houston	9-15 ▲ BYU	9-8 ■ at Texas Tech
9-15 Texas Tech	9-15 at Arkansas State	9-22 SE Louisiana	9-21 ■ Oklahoma^	9-15 at New Mexico State
9-22 ■ at Texas	9-22 ■ at TCU	9-29 ■ LSU	9-29 UAB	9-22 Texas Southern
10-3 at Southern Miss*	9-29 ● UTEP	10-6 at Army	10-6 at UTEP	9-29 at SMU
10-13 at Houston	10-13 at Southern Miss	10-13 at UAB	10-13 Marshall	10-6 ● Tulsa
10-20 Memphis	10-20 Tulane	10-20 at SMU	10-20 at UCF	10-13 East Carolina
10-27 at Marshall	10-27 at Tulsa	10-27 Memphis	10-27 SMU	10-27 ▲ Houston
11-3 ● UTEP	11-4 ▲ Houston^	11-3 ▲ Tulsa	11-3 at Tulane	11-3 at Rice
11-10 at SMU	11-10 Rice	11-10 ● UTEP	11-10 ● Houston	11-10 at Tulane
11-17 ● Tulane	11-17 UCF	11-17 at Rice	11-17 at Army	11-17 Southern Miss
11-24 ▲ Tulsa	11-24 at Memphis	11-24 at East Carolina	11-24 at Rice	11-24 at UCF
*Wednesday	*Monday ^Sunday		*Thursday ^Friday	
C-USA schedule strength: 5th	C-USA schedule strength: 3rd	C-USA schedule strength: 10th	C-USA schedule strength: 12th	C-USA schedule strength: 8th
■ Toughest game ● Must win ▲ Best chance to pull an upset				

2. TULSA

SN projection: 7-5, Papajohn's.com Bowl
National rank: 60

Strengths: The offense returns high-powered QB Paul Smith and RBs Tarrion Adams and Courtney Tennial. LBs Chris Chamberlain and Nelson Coleman return, and NT Terrell Nemons is poised for a breakout year. If Steve Craver and Anthony Germany come through at the safety spots, the league's best defense should be solid again.

Weaknesses: The offensive line is depleted, with only G Justin Morsey returning. That means sophomores Jody Whaley and Curt Puckett and freshman Tyler Holmes will have to produce quickly. The secondary also has to be retooled.

Bottom line: New coach Todd Graham has a lot of talent, and the Hurricanes should battle Houston for West Division honors. Tulsa's home game against Oklahoma is its only nonconference test.

Starters back: Offense 5, defense 6

Best players: RB Tarrion Adams, 6-1/204, Jr.; LB Chris Chamberlain, 6-2/225, Sr.; LB Nelson Coleman*, 6-2/235, Sr.; QB Paul Smith, 6-2/193, Sr.; RB Courtney Tennial, 5-9/214, Sr.

Impact newcomers: RB Charles Opeyitan, 5-10/193, Fr.; WR Dion Toliver, 5-10/175, Jr. (JC); WR A.J. Whitmore, 5-9/170, Fr.

Stadium: Skelly (artificial, 35,542)

Site: Tulsa, Okla.

Coach: Todd Graham (1st year, 4th at school)

Offensive coordinators: Herb Hand (1st year); Gus Malzahn (1st year)

Defensive coordinators: Keith Patterson (2nd year, 5th at school); Paul Randolph (1st year)

Last league title won: 2005

Last year not in a bowl: 2004

2006 record: 8-5, 5-3/3rd C-USA West

Armed Forces Bowl: Lost to Utah, 25-13

3. SMU

SN projection: 6-6, GMAC Bowl

National rank: 75

Strengths: Back are QB Justin Willis, WR Emmanuel Sanders and versatile

RB DeMyron Martin from a team that scored the third-most points in school history (325). The Mustangs easily could improve on that number this season.

Weaknesses: The defensive line loses three starters, including two all-conference performers. Also gone is safety Joe Sturdivant, whose solid play and leadership will be tough to match for heir apparent Rock Dennis, a junior college transfer.

Bottom line: If they can get consistent play on their defensive line, the Mustangs could challenge for a division title. A midseason stretch that includes games at Southern Miss, Tulsa and Houston will be key.

Starters back: Offense 9, defense 7

Best players: LB Reggie Carrington, 6-2/240, Sr.; RB DeMyron Martin, 6-2/230, Jr.; P Thomas Morstead*, 6-5/215, Jr.; WR Emmanuel Sanders, 6-1/170, So.; QB Justin Willis*, 6-1/210, So.

Impact newcomers: WR De'Von Bailey, 6-2/200, Fr.; S Rock Dennis, 5-10/175, Jr. (JC); DT Ryan Leonard, 6-1/292, Fr.

Stadium: Gerald J. Ford (artificial, 32,000)

Site: Dallas

Coach: Phil Bennett (17-41, 5 years)

Offensive coordinator: Rusty Burns (4th year)

Defensive coordinator: Jim Gush (6th year)

Last league title won: 1984 (SWC, tie)

Last bowl appearance: 1984

2006 record: 6-6, 4-4/4th C-USA West

4. UTEP

SN projection: 5-7

National rank: 92

Strengths: The Miners have a deep, talented stable of running backs headed by Marcus Thomas and transfer Terrell Jackson. The big question is whether a suspect offensive line can improve enough to enable the Miners to run the ball consistently.

Weaknesses: A defense that loses seven starters must be overhauled after giving up 31 points and 395 yards per

game. The quarterback position also is troubling. With the departure of Jordan Palmer, the Miners are sorting through five possible replacements.

Bottom line: The Miners have many questions to answer, but the schedule is soft enough—and Tulsa, Houston and Southern Miss come to El Paso—for them to win as many as six games.

Starters back: Offense 8, defense 4

Best players: S Quintin Demps*, 6-1/205, Sr.; C Robby Felix, 6-3/295, Jr.; LB Jeremy Jones, 6-1/240, Sr.; RB Marcus Thomas, 6-1/215, Sr.; WR Joe West, 6-2/210, Sr.

Impact newcomers: RB Terrell Jackson, 5-9/195, Jr. (transfer, Oregon); WR Fred Rouse, 6-3/195, So. (transfer, Florida State); LB Adam Vincent, 6-3/245, Jr. (transfer, Arizona State).

Stadium: Sun Bowl (artificial, 51,500)

Site: El Paso, Texas

Coach: Mike Price (21-15, 3 years; 150-137 overall, 25 years)

Offensive coordinator: Eric Price (4th year)

Defensive coordinator: Tim Hundley (4th year)

Last league title won: 2000 (WAC, tie)

Last bowl appearance: 2005

2006 record: 5-7, 3-5/5th C-USA West

5. RICE

SN projection: 4-8

National rank: 99

Strengths: Under new coach David Bailiff, Rice again figures to be potent offensively with QB Chase Clement, WR Jarrett Dillard and a line that returns four starters. Finding someone to replace Quinton Smith, who accounted for 91 percent of the carries by running backs, is priority No. 1.

Weaknesses: The Owls are switching to a 4-2-5 defense, which makes the search for linemen a priority. The team struggled to find adequate linemen in last season's three-man front. The Owls also must replace two safeties (Chad Price and Andray Downs) who had started 41 straight games together.

Bottom line: Rice won three games on

its final offensive play last season, a run of good fortune that isn't likely to be repeated. But there's no reason to think the Owls don't have enough firepower to at least be competitive.

Starters back: Offense 8, defense 5

Best players: WR Joel Armstrong, 5-11/190, Sr.; QB Chase Clement, 6-1/190, Jr.; WR Jarrett Dillard*, 5-11/180, Jr.; LB Brian Raines*, 6-1/220, Jr.; DB Andrew Sendejo, 6-2/210, So.

Impact newcomers: DB Joseph Leary, 6-1/180, Fr.; DE/LB Cheta Ozougwu, 6-3/229, Fr.

Stadium: Rice (artificial, 70,000)

Site: Houston

Coach: David Bailiff (1st year; 21-15 overall, 3 years)

Offensive coordinator: Todd Herman (1st year)

Defensive coordinators: Chuck Driesbach (1st year); Craig Naivar (1st year)

Last league title won: 1994 (tie, SWC)

Last year not in a bowl: 2005

2006 record: 7-6, 6-2/2nd C-USA West

New Orleans Bowl: Lost to Troy, 41-17

6. TULANE

SN projection: 3-9

National rank: 106

Strengths: With three returning starters from a young offensive line, the Green Wave should be able to move the ball. RB Matt Forte missed the final three games but still piled up 859 rushing yards and scored eight touchdowns. Forte also caught 28 passes for 360 yards and two TDs.

Weaknesses: With Lester Ricard gone, Tulane is beating the bushes for a QB. Scott Elliott has the most experience (six games), but redshirt freshman Kevin Moore has better potential. Anthony Scelfo might be more of a QB factor if he didn't split time between baseball and football.

Bottom line: With a new coach (Bob Toledo), a new staff and a new system, it could get rough. The schedule is manageable (most of the toughest games are at home), but the Green Wave will struggle to reach .500.

Starters back: Offense 5, defense 8

Best players: LB Jordan Ellis, 6-2/225, Jr.; RB Matt Forte, 6-2/225, Sr.; DL Antonio Harris, 6-3/285, Sr.; S David Skehan, 6-1/207, Sr.; WR Jeremy Williams, 6-2/194, So.

Impact newcomers: RB Andre Agers, 5-9/186, Fr.; QB Kevin Moore, 6-5/215, Fr.; FB Jordan Stephany, 6-0/240, Fr.

Stadium: Superdome (artificial, 64,900)

Site: New Orleans

Coach: Bob Toledo (1st year; 78-68 overall, 13 years)

Offensive coordinator: Dan Dodd (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Thom Kaumeyer (1st year)

Last league title won: 1998

Last bowl appearance: 2002

2006 record: 4-8, 2-6/6th C-USA West

Projected finish

EAST



WEST



The Mid-American Conference has gone retro. Old became new last year when Central Michigan won a league championship for the first time since 1994, East Division champion Ohio earned a bowl bid for the first time since 1968 and Western Michigan played in a bowl for the first time since 1988.

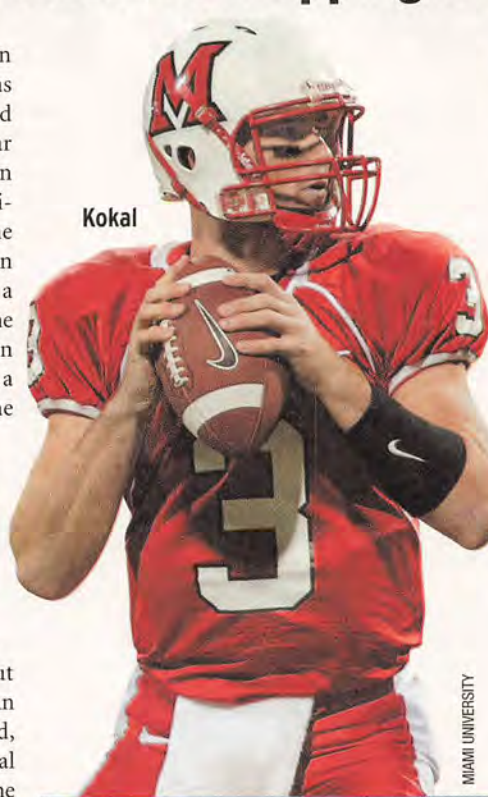
So why stop there? The 2007 season could bring more of the same.

Miami won the MAC title in 2003 with Ben Roethlisberger at quarterback but sank to 2-10 last year. An experienced backfield, quarterback Mike Kokal and a solid running game could bring the Red-Hawks out of hibernation.

Western Michigan and Ball State have gone a combined three decades without winning a title. The Broncos came close last season and could break through this year. Ball State has its hopes

pinned on quarterback Nate Davis.

And don't forget Central Michigan, last year's surprise champion. The Chippewas have several key pieces in place as they attempt to become the first team since Marshall (1997-2000) to win consecutive MAC titles.



Kokal

MIAMI UNIVERSITY

Honor roll

Best pregame atmosphere: Central Michigan
Best home-field advantage: Western Michigan
Best stadium: Kelly/Shorts, Central Michigan
Best fans: Ohio
Best mascot: Rocky the Rocket, Toledo
Strongest arm: Nate Davis, Ball State
Most dangerous scrambler: Julian Edelman, Kent State
Fastest running back: Ontario Sneed, Central Michigan
Most physical receiver: Jamarko Simmons, Western Michigan
Surest hands: Corey Partridge, Bowling Green
Most dominant O-lineman: Kory Lichtensteiger, Bowling Green
Most disruptive end: Larry English, Northern Illinois
Best run-stuffing tackle: Jason Jones, Eastern Michigan
Hardest-hitting linebacker: Tim McCarthy, Northern Illinois
Best cover man: E.J. Biggers, Western Michigan
Top NFL prospect: John Greco, OT, Toledo

BEST PLAYERS

Nate Davis, QB, Ball State. His talent and poise are well beyond that of a typical sophomore. Davis is the centerpiece star that every team in the MAC desires.

Louis Delmas, FS, Western Michigan. This junior has tremendous closing speed and exceptional instincts to always be in the right place. He's so dominant in the middle that game-planners do their best to avoid him.

John Greco, OT, Toledo. The 6-5, 318-pound senior, a two-time first-team all-conference pick, moved from right tackle to left in 2005 to replace NFL draft pick Nick Kaczur. Greco has delivered the same high-level performance.

Kory Lichtensteiger, C, Bowling Green. He's the rock around which the Falcons' extremely productive line has been built. It's no coincidence that Bowling Green led the conference in rushing yards last season.

PLAYERS WHO MUST STEP UP

Carlton Jackson, QB, Akron. The Zips have received top-level play from Charlie Frye and Luke Getsy over the last six seasons. Now it's up to Jackson, who has only one completion in his career, to step up and prove he's the Man.

Cortlan Booker, DE, Ball State. He has displayed flashes of greatness but needs more consistency. If the Cardinals are to improve on defense, Booker must become a major playmaker.

Matt Miller, G, Ohio. Miller is the anchor for a Bobcats line that needs to dominate opponents and clear space for workhorse tailback Calvin McRae.

NEWCOMERS TO WATCH

Theo Scott, QB, Ohio. Senior Brad Bower will get first shot at winning the starting quarterback job. But if Bower stumbles, the Bobcats quickly will turn to

ASCENDING ^

Miami. Rising from the bottom to the top has become a common occurrence in the parity-driven MAC. Miami, a team that struggled to a 2-10 record last season, is capable of making a title run this season in the mediocre East Division.

DESCENDING v

Northern Illinois. NIU's streak of seven straight winning seasons is the longest in the MAC. But the Huskies suffered major personnel losses that could threaten that run and drop them to unfamiliar territory in the middle of the West Division.

All-conference

Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Bryan Anderson, C. Michigan (6-5, 194, So.)
WR	Corey Partridge, Bowling Green (5-11, 184, Jr.)
TE	Darius Hill, Ball State (6-6, 233, Jr.)
T	John Greco, Toledo (6-5, 318, Sr.)
T	Andrew Hartline, C. Michigan (6-5, 297, Jr.)
G	Eric Tunney, C. Michigan (6-3, 291, Sr.)
G	Matt Miller, Ohio (6-3, 312, Sr.)
C	Kory Lichtensteiger, Bowling Green (6-3, 300, Sr.)
QB	Nate Davis, Ball State (6-2, 214, So.)
RB	Kalvin McRae, Ohio (5-11, 208, Sr.)
RB	Jalen Parmele, Toledo (6-0, 222, Sr.)

Defense

Pos.	Name, school
E	Larry English, Northern Illinois (6-3, 255, Jr.)
E	Jameson Hartke, Ohio (6-4, 262, Jr.)
T	Jason Jones, E. Michigan (6-5, 262, Sr.)
T	Landon Cohen, Ohio (6-3, 274, Sr.)
LB	Joey Hudson, Miami (6-2, 230, Jr.)
LB	Red Keith, C. Michigan (5-11, 242, Sr.)
LB	Tim McCarthy, Northern Illinois (6-0, 232, Jr.)
CB	E.J. Biggers, W. Michigan (6-0, 165, Jr.)
CB	Trey Buice, Ball State (5-10, 179, Jr.)
S	Louis Delmas, W. Michigan (6-0, 181, Jr.)
S	Barry Church, Toledo (6-3, 216, So.)

Specialists

Pos.	Name, school
K	Chris Nendick, Northern Illinois (5-11, 183, Sr.)
P	Chris Miller, Ball State (6-2, 205, Jr.)
KR	Travis Shelton, Temple (5-11, 185, Jr.)
SN All-American	

Players of the year

Offense: Nate Davis, QB, Ball State
Defense: Louis Delmas, FS, Western Michigan

Newcomers of the year

Offense: Armand Robinson, WR, Miami
Defense: Lamar McPherson, LB, Temple

junior college transfer Scott.

Lamar McPherson, LB, Temple. Philadelphians have been waiting a year to see this talented Syracuse transfer become a difference-maker for their Owls.

Frank Edmonds, RB, Ball State.

The Cardinals, in desperate need of somebody who can run the ball, will give this talented freshman every chance to become an immediate contributor.

BEST COACH

Bill Cubit, Western Michigan. He opened eyes with the rapid improvement of this once-stagnant program. The Broncos were 1-10 the year before Cubit arrived; they're 15-9 over the last two seasons.

BEST STAFF

Ohio. Under the direction of coach Frank Solich, this group has executed a nice two-season turnaround. In the two years before they arrived, the Bobcats were 3-13 in MAC games; Ohio was 7-1 in the

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
Northern Illinois	7-6	7-5	9-3	10-2	8-4	41-20
Toledo	5-7	9-3	9-4*	8-4	9-5	40-23
Bowling Green	4-8	6-5	9-3	11-3	9-3	39-22
Miami	2-10	7-4	8-5	13-1*	7-5	37-25
Akron	5-7	7-6*	6-5	7-5	4-8	29-31
Central Michigan	10-4*	6-5	4-7	3-9	4-8	27-33
Western Michigan	8-5	7-4	1-10	5-7	4-8	25-34
Ohio	9-5	4-7	4-7	2-10	4-8	23-37
Ball State	5-7	4-7	2-9	4-8	6-6	21-37
Kent State	6-6	1-10	5-6	5-7	3-9	20-38
Eastern Michigan	1-11	4-7	4-7	3-9	3-9	15-43
Temple [^]	1-11	0-11	2-9	1-11	4-8	8-50
Buffalo	2-10	1-10	2-9	1-11	1-11	7-51

*Conference champ ^ Joins conference this season

MAC and won the East title last year.

ON THE HOT SEAT

Jeff Genyk, Eastern Michigan. It's time for his Eagles to show some progress. Genyk is 9-25 in three seasons, including a 1-11 step backward last year. EMU squandered several late-game opportunities to win in 2006.

GAMES TO WATCH

Toledo at Central Michigan, Sept. 8.

Toledo slumped to fifth place in the West last year. This game against last year's MAC champion should give the Rockets a good gauge on where they stand in their comeback attempt.

Ball State at Western Michigan, Oct. 20. These teams played five overtimes when they met at Western two years ago. This game will be a showdown to determine power in the West. It's a classic battle of

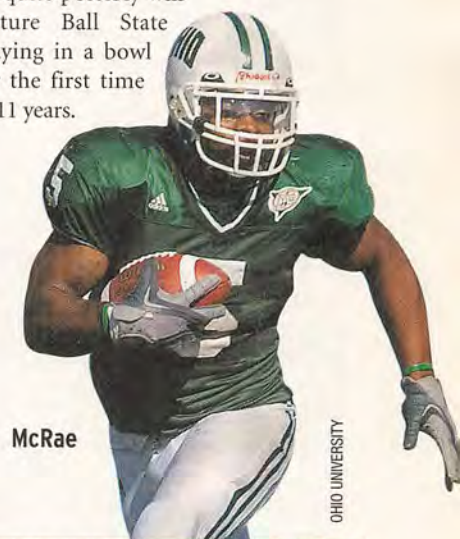
strengths: BSU's high-powered passing vs. WMU's stingy pass defense.

Central Michigan at Western Michigan, Nov. 6. This matchup pits the fiercest rivals in the conference, and it could be the MAC's marquee game. The Broncos still are steaming from a 31-7 loss last season, making this the game on the schedule one that is circled in red.

Miami at Ohio, Nov. 24. It isn't often that a MAC championship is decided in the final game of the season, but that could be the case with this one. The Red-Hawks and Bobcats have a long, spicy rivalry, and the chance for one to beat the other and win the East will have everyone salivating.

BOWL BOUND

The division winners historically have earned bids to the Motor City Bowl and GMAC Bowl, meaning Western Michigan and Miami could be making travel plans for the holidays. The third MAC spot, the second-year International Bowl in Toronto, quite possibly will feature Ball State playing in a bowl for the first time in 11 years.



Recruiting buzz Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact
1. Toledo	RB Morgan Williams, 6-0/190	QB Travaris Cadet, 6-0/193
2. Akron	OL Paul Simkovich, 6-4/298	OL Casey Estrada, 6-5/285
3. Miami	QB Clay Belton, 6-5/220	OL Brandon Brooks, 6-4/300
4. Ball State	RB Frank Edmonds, 5-6/180	DT Renee Perry, 6-0/268
5. Western Michigan	WR Schneider Julien, 5-10/180	TE Anthony Middleton, 6-4/197
6. Eastern Michigan	OL Darrell Davis-Budanauro, 6-4/370	RB Dwayne Priest, 5-8/175
7. Ohio	RB Robert Hightower, 5-11/190	LB Noah Keller, 6-2/222
8. Central Michigan	DT Josh Allison, 6-2/246	DE JJ Watt, 6-5/220
9. Temple	LB Wallace Bates, 6-2/225	WR Michael Campbell, 6-3/205
10. Kent State	DE Darrius Carter, 6-5/235	LB Paul Stefanik, 6-1/217
11. Bowling Green	RB Eric Ransom, 5-10/185	RB Mark Wooldridge, 5-9/187
12. Buffalo	OL Matt Ostrowski, 6-6/299	DB Alan Hayes, 6-0/190
13. Northern Illinois	DE John Hopkins, 6-1/218	QB DeMarcus Grady, 6-0/189

Rankings by Rivals.com

UNIT rankings

	Backfield	Receivers	O-line	Overall	D-line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
Akron	11	6	10	9	11	1	7	5	10	6
Ball State	4	3	7	4	8	9	9	9	6	7
Bowling Green	1	2	8	2	10	10	8	11	13	11
Buffalo	12	13	13	13	13	12	3	12	11	12
Central Michigan	2	4	1	1	7	4	13	8	9	9
Eastern Michigan	10	11	12	12	2	7	12	7	12	13
Kent State	5	9	3	5	9	6	11	10	3	4
Miami	3	10	9	8	6	3	4	4	1	5
Northern Illinois	9	7	4	7	4	2	5	1	5	2
Ohio	6	12	11	11	1	13	6	6	2	3
Temple	13	8	6	10	12	11	10	13	8	10
Toledo	8	1	2	3	5	5	2	3	4	8
Western Michigan	7	5	5	6	3	8	1	2	7	1

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

Returning leaders

RUSHING Player, school, class	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.
1. Calvin McRae, Ohio, Sr.	14	258	1,252	4.9	66	15	89.4	18
2. Jalen Parmele, Toledo, Sr.	12	207	1,131	5.5	92	8	94.3	28
3. Mark Bonds, Western Michigan, Sr.	12	252	1,082	4.3	57	7	90.2	31
4. Dennis Kennedy, Akron, Jr.	11	226	914	4.0	30	9	83.1	48
5. Eugene Jarvis, Kent State, So.	11	185	798	4.3	43	3	72.5	167

PASSING Player, school, class	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1. Dan LeFevour, Central Michigan, So.	14	247	388	63.7	10	3,031	12.3	26	146.2	15
2. Mike Kokal, Miami, Sr.	11	208	355	58.6	8	2,419	11.6	14	124.3	44
3. Nate Davis, Ball State, So.	12	150	244	61.5	8	1,975	13.2	18	147.3	67
4. Julian Edelman, Kent State, Jr.	11	134	242	55.4	11	1,859	13.9	10	124.4	72
5. Anthony Turner, Bowling Green, Jr.	10	144	252	57.1	5	1,596	11.1	11	120.8	84

RECEIVING Player, school, class	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.
1. Bryan Anderson, Central Michigan, So.	14	73	867	50	5	5.2	11.9	61.9	18
2. Jamarko Simmons, Western Michigan, Jr.	13	61	668	76	2	4.7	11.0	51.4	140
3. Britt Davis, Northern Illinois, Jr.	13	57	731	41	3	4.4	12.8	56.2	158
4. Corey Partridge, Bowling Green, Jr.	10	55	658	40	3	5.5	12.0	65.8	167
5. Chris Hopkins, Toledo, Sr.	12	54	565	42	7	4.5	10.5	47.1	171



MIAMI REDHAWKS

OFFENSE Mobile, strong-armed quarterback Mike Kokal heads a unit that returns eight starters. Kokal, who threw for 2,419 yards and 14 touchdowns last season, should be well protected by a veteran line that features left tackle Charlie Norden, center Steve Meister and Dave DiFranco, who is listed at guard but can play three positions. Tailback Brandon Murphy, a 1,000 yard rusher in 2005, is healthy after an injury-plagued 2006 and provides needed balance. The only offensive uncertainty is at wide receiver, though tight end Tom Crabtree is a big, athletic target and a plus in the passing game.

DEFENSE A unit that was soft against the run last season will benefit from improved depth and experience. Craig Mester and Joe Coniglio are athletic ends, and linebackers Joey Hudson and Clayton Mullins were the top tacklers on last year's team. The secondary features playmakers in safety Robbie Wilson and shutdown cornerback Jerrod Gaines.

SPECIAL TEAMS Punter Jake Richardson is a third-year starter with the knack for pinning opponents inside the 20-yard line. Kicker Trevor Cook won the starting job five games into last season and connected on 10-of-13 field goal tries. Nathan Parseghian handles kickoffs and provides depth behind Cook.

BOTTOM LINE This program is used to winning, so players are anxious to get under way and erase last year's 2-10 nightmare. Better experience across the board gives the RedHawks a chance to bounce back and contend for the East title. Five games against teams from BCS conferences could make things tough, but surviving that gauntlet also would make Miami a tough customer for the rest of the MAC.

Quickhits

Stadium: Yager (artificial, 24,286)
Site: Oxford, Ohio
Coach: Shane Montgomery (9-14, 2 years, 6 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Shane Montgomery (7th year)
Defensive coordinator: Jay Hood (1st year, 3rd at school)
Last league title won: 2003
Last year not in a bowl: 2004
2006 record: 2-10, 2-6/5th MAC East

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
8-30	at Ball State*	17-20
9-8	■ at Minnesota	
9-15	Cincinnati	10-24
9-22	at Colorado	
9-29	▲ Syracuse	14-34
10-6	at Kent State	14-16
10-13	● Bowling Green	9-7
10-20	at Temple	
10-27	at Vanderbilt	
11-3	Buffalo	38-31
11-14	Akron^	13-24
11-24	at Ohio	24-34

*Thursday ^Wednesday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

MAC schedule strength: 1st

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	88	Dustin Woods (5-11, 190, So.)
LT	76	Charlie Norden (6-6, 300, Sr.)
LG	68	Dave DiFranco (6-3, 303, Jr.)
C	72	Steve Meister (6-2, 291, Sr.)
RG	50	Matt McKeown (6-4, 271, Jr.)
RT	55	Steve Sutter (6-6, 278, Jr.)
TE	80	Tom Crabtree (6-5, 235, Jr.)
WR	2	Eugene Harris (5-10, 181, Fr.)
WR	18	Sean McVay (5-10, 185, Jr.)
QB	3	Mike Kokal (6-2, 213, Sr.)
RB	24	Brandon Murphy (5-8, 177, Sr.)
K	19	Trevor Cook (6-2, 184, So.)
KR	88	Dustin Woods (5-11, 190, So.)

Defense

E	51	Joe Coniglio (6-2, 249, Jr.)
T	94	Ben Huddle (6-4, 277, Jr.)
NT	93	Martin Channels (6-0, 335, So.)
E	99	Travis Craven (6-4, 260, So.)
SLB	44	Caleb Bostic (6-3, 222, So.)
MLB	48	Joey Hudson (6-2, 230, Jr.)
WLB	9	Clayton Mullins (6-2, 231, Jr.)
CB	33	Jarrid Gaines (5-11, 192, Sr.)
FS	13	Jordan Gafford (6-0, 202, So.)
SS	6	Robbie Wilson (6-0, 210, Jr.)
CB	26	Wendell Brunson (5-11, 180, So.)
P	4	Jake Richardson (6-1, 201, Jr.)
PR	2	Eugene Harris (5-10, 181, Fr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman
 SN All-conference

OHIO BOBCATS

OFFENSE The Bobcats have the conference's most productive workhorse in tailback Calvin McRae, who has posted back-to-back 1,000 yard seasons, but the surrounding cast is not so proven. A new quarterback, either junior college transfer Theo Scott or Brad Bower, will have to take some defensive focus off McRae, who scored 15 touchdowns and made a team-leading 29 receptions. Justin Fitzgerald and Chido Nwokocha will have to become viable options at receiver. The line, one of the best in the country at protecting the quarterback last year, has guard Matt Miller as its anchor.

DEFENSE An experienced front wall that features tackle Landon Cohen and end Jameson Hartke will be disruptive and strong. But the linebacking corps is being completely rebuilt around senior Taj Henley. The secondary has the reliable Mark Parson and Idris Lawrence providing the outside coverage, and Todd Koenig and Michael Mitchell are proven safeties.

SPECIAL TEAMS Michael Braunstein transfers in from Washington with a reputation as a reliable and accurate kicker. Matt Schulte will compete with freshman Robert Hightower for the punting job. Josh Abrams is a reliable return man.

BOTTOM LINE The Bobcats are still in transition mode as they move from their traditional run-based option attack to a more diverse and potentially explosive offense. McRae has the run side covered, so the passing game is the wild card. Defense carried the Bobcats last season, and strong play from the linebackers will be needed to keep Ohio atop the East Division. If that happens, a second straight berth in the conference championship game would be within reach.

Quickhits

Stadium: Peden (artificial, 24,000)
Site: Athens, Ohio
Coach: Frank Solich (13-12, 2 years; 71-31 overall, 8 years)
Offensive coordinator: Tim Albin (3rd year)
Defensive coordinator: Jimmy Burrow (3rd year)
Last league title won: 1968
Last year not in a bowl: 2005
2006 record: 9-5, 7-1/1st MAC East
MAC championship game: Lost to Central Michigan, 31-10
GMAC Bowl: Lost to Southern Miss, 28-7

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	Gardner-Webb	
9-8	at La-Lafayette	
9-15	■ at Virginia Tech	
9-22	Wyoming	
9-29	Kent State	17-7
10-6	at Buffalo	42-7
10-13	Eastern Michigan	16-10
10-20	at Toledo	
10-27	at Bowling Green	9-21
11-2	● Temple*	
11-7	at Akron^	17-7
11-24	▲ Miami	34-24

*Friday ^Wednesday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

MAC schedule strength: 13th

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	86	Justin Fitzgerald (6-3, 198, Sr.)
LT	74	Josh Leuck (6-3, 289, Jr.)
LG	77	Paul Johnson (6-2, 318, Sr.)
C	66	Tommy Stuck (6-1, 286, Jr.)
RG	79	Matt Miller (6-3, 312, Sr.)
RT	52	David Shelby (6-4, 296, Sr.)
TE	16	Andrew Mooney (6-3, 233, Jr.)
WR	23	Taylor Price (6-1, 184, So.)
QB	14	Brad Bower (6-2, 215, Sr.)
RB	5	Calvin McRae (5-11, 208, Sr.)
FB	39	Mitch Morsillo (6-1, 243, So.)
K	14	Michael Braunstein (5-6, 198, Sr.)
KR	31	Josh Abrams (6-0, 197, Sr.)

Defense

E	95	Ernie Hodge (6-2, 271, So.)
T	55	Landon Cohen (6-3, 274, Sr.)
NG	94	Brett Sykes (6-2, 273, Sr.)
E	90	Jamason Hartke (6-4, 262, Jr.)
SLB	35	Michael Brown (6-3, 230, Jr.)
MLB	56	Taj Henley (6-1, 232, Sr.)
WLB	48	Jordan Meyers (6-0, 220, Jr.)
CB	24	Mark Parson (5-10, 188, Jr.)
FS	8	Todd Koenig (6-2, 214, Sr.)
SS	34	Michael Mitchell (6-1, 217, Jr.)
CB	4	Idris Lawrence (5-8, 170, So.)
P	43	Matt Schulte (6-0, 179, Fr.)
PR	28	Chris Garrett (5-8, 174, So.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman
 SN All-conference

AKRON		BOWLING GREEN		BUFFALO		KENT STATE		TEMPLE	
Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent
9-1	vs. Army*	9-1	at Minnesota	8-30	at Rutgers*	8-30	at Iowa State*	8-31	Navy*
9-8	at Ohio State	9-8	at Michigan State	9-8	at Temple	9-8	at Kentucky	9-8	Buffalo
9-15	at Indiana	9-22	Temple	9-15	at Penn State	9-15	Delaware State	9-15	at Connecticut
9-22	Kent State	9-29	Western Kentucky	9-22	Baylor	9-22	at Akron	9-22	at Bowling Green
9-29	at Connecticut	10-6	at Boston College	9-29	at Ball State	9-29	at Ohio	9-29	at Army
10-6	at Western Michigan	10-13	at Miami	10-6	Ohio	10-6	Miami	10-6	Northern Illinois
10-13	Temple	10-20	at Kent State	10-13	Toledo	10-13	at Ohio State	10-13	at Akron
10-27	at Buffalo	10-27	Ohio	10-20	at Syracuse	10-27	at Bowling Green	10-20	at Miami
11-2	at Bowling Green*	11-2	Akron*	10-27	Akron	10-27	at Central Michigan	11-2	at Ohio*
11-7	Ohio*	11-9	at Eastern Michigan*	11-3	at Miami	11-10	at Northern Illinois	11-10	Penn State
11-14	at Miami*	11-17	at Buffalo	11-17	Bowling Green	11-17	at Temple	11-17	Kent State
11-23	Central Michigan*	11-23	Toledo*	11-24	at Kent State	11-24	Buffalo	11-24	at Western Michigan
*at Cleveland ^Friday		*Friday		*Thursday		*Thursday		*Friday	
MAC schedule strength: 10th		MAC schedule strength: 7th		MAC schedule strength: 3rd		MAC schedule strength: 8th		MAC schedule strength: 11th	
■ Toughest game ● Must win ▲ Best chance to pull an upset									

3. Bowling Green

SN projection: 7-5

National rank: 67

Strengths: The Falcons drive defensive coordinators crazy with one of the more innovative offenses in the MAC, which helps them cover up their defensive shortcomings. When you anchor a line with two-time all-conference C Kory Lichtensteiger, put dual-threat QB Anthony Turner and powerful TB Chris Bullock behind him and throw the scary athletic ability of wide receiver Freddie Barnes (11 TDs) into the mix, sparks are sure to fly.

Weaknesses: The kicking game was bad last season. A pair of junior college players—P Nick Iovinelli and K Sinisa Vrvilo—have been ushered in to patch that huge hole. They don't need to be great, just a lot better.

Bottom line: With eight starters back on both sides of the ball, Bowling Green could make a run at the East Division title. A big turnover on the coaching staff (five new faces) might force some adjustment, but Turner has the potential to be one of the league's best quarterbacks, and an explosive offense can hide a lot of flaws.

Starters back: Offense 8, defense 8

Best players: WR Freddie Barnes, 6-2/212, So.; TB Chris Bullock, 5-11/220, So.; CB Kenny Lewis, 5-11/185, Jr.; C Kory Lichtensteiger*, 6-3/300, Sr.; WR Corey Partridge*, 5-11/184, Jr.; QB Anthony Turner, 6-2/229, Jr.;

Impact newcomers: RB Eric Ransom, 5-10/185, Jr. (JC); P Nick Iovinelli, 6-0/180, Jr. (JC); K Sinisa Vrvilo, 6-1/234, Jr. (JC).

Stadium: Doyt Perry (grass, 30,599)

Site: Bowling Green, Ohio

Coach: Gregg Brandon (30-19, 4 years, 6 at school)

Offensive coordinator: Mick McCall (1st year, 5th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Mike Ward (1st year, 16th at school)

Last league title won: 1992

Last bowl appearance: 2004

2006 record: 4-8, 3-5/T3rd MAC East

4. Temple

SN projection: 4-8

National rank: 95

Strengths: WR Travis Shelton, the cousin of Chicago Bears DB Devin Hester, is a special playmaker on offense and as a kick returner. C Alex Derenthal had such a good 2006 season that he was voted team MVP. He anchors a line that has 10 experienced players. LB Lamar McPherson, a transfer from Syracuse, brings toughness to the defense.

Weaknesses: The Owls must find an offensive leader. QB Adam DiMichele started nine games last year and probably will get the nod over Vaughn Charlton. The only experienced TB is Jason Harper, who rushed for just 186 yards.

Bottom line: Temple is a first-year member of the MAC. The Owls struggled to a 1-11 record last year but were competitive in three of five games against MAC foes while playing 22 true freshmen. Their lone win came against Bowling Green.

Starters back: Offense 9, defense 7

Best players: C Alex Derenthal, 6-4/292, Jr.; OT Andre Douglas, 6-5/305, Jr.; WR Travis Shelton*, 5-11/185, Jr.

Impact newcomers: LB Wallace Bates, 6-2/230, Jr. (JC); DE Morris Blueford, 6-4/220, Fr.; TB Marcellous Grigsby, 5-11/202, Jr. (JC); LB Lamar McPherson, 5-11/205, So. (transfer from Syracuse).

Stadium: Lincoln Financial (grass, 68,532)

Site: Philadelphia

Coach: Al Golden (1-11, 1 year)

Offensive coordinator: George DeLeone (2nd year)

Defensive coordinator: Mark D'Onofrio (2nd year)

Last league title won: 1967 (Middle Atlantic)

Last bowl appearance: 1979

2006 record: 1-11 (Independent)

5. Akron

SN projection: 4-8

National rank: 96

Strengths: The culture has changed at

Akron under J.D. Brookhart, and his wide-open spread offense has produced winning records in two of the last three years and the school's first MAC title. The defense returns its top six tacklers from 2006 and is the team's most reliable unit.

Weaknesses: The lack of a pass rush hurt the Zips last season (they had just 17 sacks) and that spells trouble against the MAC's high-powered offenses. The running game needs a solid jolt, too, after ranking at the bottom of the MAC last year.

Bottom line: Carlton Jackson or Chris Jacquemain must emerge at quarterback as a replacement for Luke Getsy. A revamped offensive line won't help that process, but the Zips have enough talent at receiver and on defense to find their way to the middle of the pack.

Starters back: Offense 5, defense 8

Best players: WR Jabari Arthur, 6-4/225, Sr.; DB Reggie Corner, 5-9/175, Sr.; RB Dennis Kennedy, 5-11/215, Jr.; LB Paris McNeal, 6-0/220, Sr.; LB Brion Stokes, 5-11/220, Sr.

Impact newcomers: OL Casey Estrada, 6-5/290, Jr. (JC); DB Miguel Graham, 5-9/160, Jr. (JC); DL Deni Odofin, 6-4/230, Fr.

Stadium: Rubber Bowl (artificial, 31,000)

Site: Akron, Ohio

Coach: J.D. Brookhart (18-18, 3 years)

Offensive coordinator: Joe Moorhead (2nd year, 3rd at school)

Defensive coordinator: Jim Fleming (4th year)

Last league title won: 2005

Last bowl appearance: 2005

2006 record: 5-7, 3-5/T3rd MAC East

6. Kent State

SN projection: 3-9

National rank: 109

Strengths: QB Julian Edelman is one of the top playmakers in the MAC, and Kent State coaches spent most of the offseason devising ways to make him even more effective. The program is brimming with confidence since the Golden Flashes showed a five-game

improvement and finished second in the East last season.

Weaknesses: The defense must replace three all-conference players and the offense needs a go-to receiver who can bail out a scrambling Edelman. Depth is an issue at a number of positions.

Bottom line: An outstanding quarterback surrounded by marginal talent might not be enough to push the Golden Flashes above a break-even record.

Starters back: Offense 8, defense 8

Best players: QB Julian Edelman, 6-0/195, Jr.; DL Kevin Hogan, 6-3/210, So.; RB Eugene Jarvis, 5-5/158, So.; DB Jack Williams, 5-9/176, Sr.

Impact newcomers: LB Howard Bowens, 6-0/215, Fr.; DL Darrius Carter, 6-5/245, Jr. (JC); TE Jon Simpson, 6-5/225, Fr.

Stadium: Dix (artificial, 29,287)

Site: Kent, Ohio

Coach: Doug Martin (12-22, 3 years, 4 at school)

Offensive coordinator: Doug Martin (5th year)

Defensive coordinator: Pete Rekstis (4th year)

Last league title won: 1972

Last bowl appearance: 1972

2006 record: 6-6, 5-3/2nd MAC East

7. Buffalo

SN projection: 0-12

National rank: 118

Strengths: The Bulls have one of the most experienced defensive backfields in the MAC, and coach Turner Gill is challenging that group to be difference-makers. S Kareem Byrom is the leader of the secondary and Jesse Imes, who splits time between safety and cornerback, gives Gill the option of using hybrid coverages.

Weaknesses: Drew Willy returns at quarterback, and his 1,391 passing yards and six TD throws in eight games are not good enough to make this team competitive. Willy needs to make a quantum leap, and Gill needs to rush the development of backup help.

Bottom line: Never mind that 16 starters return. Gill will be hard-pressed to change the mind-set of a program that has not often tasted victory.

Starters back: Offense 8, defense 8

Best players: WR Terrance Breaux, 6-2/217, Sr.; S Kareem Byrom, 5-10/200, Sr.; LB Ollice Ervin, 6-1/232, Sr.; C Jamey Richard, 6-4/301, Sr.; RB James Starks, 6-2/206, So.

Impact newcomers: LB Adekunle Akingba, 6-4/205, Jr. (JC); WR Terrell Jackson, 6-0/180, Fr.; QB Ed Young, 6-0/180, Fr.

Stadium: University (artificial, 29,013)

Site: Buffalo

Coach: Turner Gill (2-10, 1 year)

Offensive coordinator: Turner Gill (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Jimmy Williams (2nd year)

Last league title won: None

Last bowl appearance: None

2006 record: 2-10, 1-7/6th MAC East



WESTERN MICHIGAN BRONCOS

OFFENSE The Broncos like to control the game's tempo and have two capable tailbacks, Mark Bonds and Brandon West, running behind an experienced line anchored by center Robbie Krutilla. The starting quarterback probably will be either Thomas Peregrin or Tim Hiller. Peregrin, the backup last season, is a former junior college star. Hiller was the conference's freshman of the year in 2005 but missed last season with a knee injury.

DEFENSE The Broncos' high-pressure defense recorded a nation-best 24 interceptions last year. Cornerback Londen Fryar, the unit's top playmaker, heads a cast that includes corner E.J. Biggers and safeties Louis Delmas and C.J. Wilson. Dustin Duclo is the only proven starter at linebacker, but the front wall is solid with tackles Nick Varcadipane and Cory Flom and end Zach Davidson.

SPECIAL TEAMS Punter Jim Laney averaged only 38.2 yards per kick last season, but he put 15 kicks inside the 20-yard line. The most pressing need is to find a kicker to replace Nate Meyer. Mike Jones and Brett Meldrum are inexperienced, though Jones attempted and made a 22-yarder last year. West served as the team's kick returner last season and averaged 28.0 yards, the second-best mark in the conference.

BOTTOM LINE The Broncos won't wow many opponents with top-flight talent across the board, but they don't have a noticeable weakness, either. That steadiness makes a big difference over the course of a long season. Western Michigan has established a championship mind-set under third-year coach Bill Cubit, and playing Ball State and Central Michigan at home should give the Broncos the edge they need to rise to the top of the West Division.

Quickhits

Stadium: Waldo (artificial, 30,200)
Site: Kalamazoo, Mich.
Coach: Bill Cubit (15-9, 2 years, 5 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Bill Cubit (1st year, 3rd at school)
Defensive coordinator: Bill Miller (1st year)
Last league title won: 1988
Last year not in a bowl: 2005
2006 record: 8-5, 6-2/2nd MAC West
International Bowl: Lost to Cincinnati, 27-24

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	■ at West Virginia	
9-8	▲ Indiana	20-39
9-15	at Missouri	
9-22	Central Connecticut	
9-29	at Toledo	31-10
10-6	Akron	17-0
10-13	at Northern Illinois	16-14
10-20	● Ball State	41-27
10-27	at Eastern Michigan	18-15
11-6	Central Michigan*	7-31
11-17	at Iowa	
11-24	Temple	41-7

*Tuesday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

MAC schedule strength: 6th

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	7	Herb Martin (6-2, 187, Sr.)
LT	67	Rob Johnson (6-4, 329, Jr.)
LG	62	Matt Williams (6-2, 282, Sr.)
C	78	Robbie Krutilla (6-3, 308, Sr.)
RG	61	Nick Clemens (6-5, 320, Fr.)
RT	75	James Blair (6-3, 338, Sr.)
TE	82	Branden Ledbetter (6-5, 221, Jr.)
WR	27	Jamarko Simmons (6-2, 231, Jr.)
WR	86	Kelly Martin (6-3, 180, Sr.)
QB	14	Thomas Peregrin (6-3, 185, Sr.)
RB	34	Mark Bonds (5-10, 215, Sr.)
K	17	Mike Jones (5-11, 176, Sr.)
KR	2	Brandon West (5-10, 176, So.)

Defense

E	54	Greg Marshall (6-0, 230, Jr.)
T	98	Cory Flom (6-3, 285, Jr.)
T	99	Nick Varcadipane (6-2, 272, Jr.)
E	90	Zach Davidson (6-2, 243, Jr.)
SLB	35	Austin Pritchard (6-5, 225, Jr.)
MLB	59	Dustin Duclo (5-10, 225, Jr.)
WLB	19	Cornelius Robinson (6-2, 210, Jr.)
CB	1	E.J. Biggers (6-0, 165, Jr.)
FS	9	Louis Delmas (6-0, 181, Jr.)
SS	26	C.J. Wilson (6-2, 206, Jr.)
CB	6	Londen Fryar (5-11, 185, Jr.)
P	39	Jim Laney (6-4, 207, Sr.)
PR	1	E.J. Biggers (6-0, 165, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman
 SN All-conference



BALL STATE CARDINALS

OFFENSE Coach Brady Hoke's ideal offense would pound defenses with a strong running attack. But he'll take the hand he has been dealt, which is a potent passing attack built around sophomore quarterback Nate Davis. Look for the poised and accurate Davis to make good use of tight end Darius Hill, the MAC's top red zone target, and wide receiver Dante Love, who tortures defenders with his speed and shiftiness. The tailback position, unproductive in recent years, doesn't have a proven performer.

DEFENSE The Cardinals are built for speed; now they must develop toughness. One big change will be a reliance on blitzes to create pressure. The team's 3-4 alignment puts linebackers in position to make plays, especially on the edges. Cortlan Booker must become a more consistent force, and Bryant Haines already is solid in the middle. Look for nose tackle Amara Koroma to continue his disruptive ways up front, and Ball State should be well fortified in the back, especially with cornerback Trey Buice showing signs of becoming the best player in the conference at his position.

SPECIAL TEAMS Punter Chris Miller, a two-time all-conference performer, will concentrate more on placing the ball near the sideline instead of kicking into the end zone. Ball State must improve its kickoff and punt return units to help in the battle for field position.

BOTTOM LINE Ball State hasn't won the conference championship since 1996. The Cardinals have as much offensive firepower as any team in the league, but their bid for a championship probably will be decided by their defense. That unit, one of the least feared in the MAC a year ago, will have to improve markedly.

Quickhits

Stadium: Scheumann (grass, 22,500)
Site: Muncie, Ind.
Coach: Brady Hoke (10-24, 3 years)
Offensive coordinator: Stan Parrish (1st year, 2nd at school)
Defensive coordinator: Mark Smith (4th year)
Last league title won: 1996
Last bowl appearance: 1996
2006 record: 5-7, 5-3/T3rd MAC West

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
8-30	Miami*	20-17
9-8	at Eastern Michigan	38-20
9-15	at Navy	
9-22	■ at Nebraska	
9-29	Buffalo	55-25
10-6	Central Michigan	7-18
10-13	Western Kentucky	
10-20	▲ at Western Michigan	27-41
10-27	at Illinois	
11-3	at Indiana	23-24
11-13	● Toledo^	20-17
11-24	at Northern Illinois	28-40

*Thursday ^Tuesday

■ Toughest game ● Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

MAC schedule strength: 2nd

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	86	Dante Love (5-10, 176, Jr.)
LT	79	Andre Ramsey (6-5, 305, Jr.)
LG	73	Lance Helton (6-5, 294, Fr.)
C	52	Dan Gerberry (6-3, 287, Jr.)
RG	75	Eric Larrimer (6-5, 293, Jr.)
RT	71	Robert Brewster (6-5, 312, Jr.)
TE	82	Madaris Grant (6-5, 228, So.)
TE	88	Darius Hill (6-6, 233, Jr.)
WR	83	Dan Dunford (5-10, 185, Sr.)
QB	13	Nate Davis (6-2, 214, So.)
H-B	33	MiQuale Lewis (5-6, 184, So.)
K	95	Jake Hogue (5-9, 186, Fr.)
KR	86	Dante Love (5-10, 176, Jr.)

Defense

E	65	Drew Duffin (6-3, 253, So.)
NT	93	Amara Koroma (6-2, 275, Sr.)
T	94	Jacob Jordan (6-3, 280, Sr.)
E	44	Cortlan Booker (6-2, 245, Sr.)
SLB	99	Kenny Meeks (6-2, 202, Sr.)
MLB	11	Wendell Brown (6-0, 214, Sr.)
WLB	49	Bryant Haines (6-5, 230, Jr.)
CB	12	Trey Lewis (6-0, 194, Jr.)
FS	1	Eddie Burk (5-11, 202, Sr.)
SS	21	Chris Allen (5-10, 188, Sr.)
CB	8	Trey Buice (5-10, 179, Jr.)
P	35	Chris Miller (6-2, 205, Jr.)
PR	3	B.J. Hill (5-7, 180, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman
 SN All-conference

CENTRAL MICHIGAN CHIPPEWAS		EASTERN MICHIGAN		NORTHERN ILLINOIS HUSKIES		TOLEDO	
Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent
9-1	at Kansas	9-1	at Pitt	9-1	vs. Iowa*	9-1	■ Purdue
9-8	● Toledo	9-8	▲ Ball State	9-8	Southern Illinois	9-8	at Central Michigan
9-15	at Purdue	9-15	at Northern Illinois	9-15	● Eastern Michigan	9-15	at Kansas
9-22	North Dakota State	9-22	● Howard	9-22	at Idaho	9-22	Iowa State
9-29	Northern Illinois	9-29	at Vanderbilt	9-29	at Central Michigan	9-29	● Western Michigan
10-6	at Ball State	10-6	■ at Michigan	10-6	at Temple	10-6	Liberty
10-13	Army	10-13	at Ohio	10-13	Western Michigan	10-13	at Buffalo
10-20	■ at Clemson	10-19	vs. Northwestern**	10-20	■ at Wisconsin	10-20	Ohio
10-27	at Kent State	10-27	Western Michigan	10-27	at Toledo	10-27	Northern Illinois
11-6	▲ at Western Michigan*	11-3	at Toledo	11-10	Kent State	11-3	Eastern Michigan
11-16	Eastern Michigan*	11-9	Bowling Green*	11-17	at Navy	11-13	at Ball State*
11-23	at Akron*	11-16	at Central Michigan*	11-24	▲ Ball State	11-23	▲ at Bowling Green*
*Tuesday ^Friday		*Friday ^at Detroit		*at Chicago		*Tuesday ^Friday	
MAC schedule strength: 5th		MAC schedule strength: 4th		MAC schedule strength: 9th		MAC schedule strength: 12th	

■ Toughest game ● Must win ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

3. Toledo

SN projection: 7-5

National rank: 68

Strengths: The Rockets return three all-conference offensive performers in TE Chris Hopkins, RB Jalen Parmele and LT John Greco. The trick will be to fill the holes around them. E Sean Williamson is the best player on a deep, experienced and athletic defensive line, and a battle-tested secondary features CB Nigel Morris and SS Barry Church and FS Tyrrell Herbert. Disruption will be the mantra of a defense coaches hope will return the team to the level it reached when Toledo played in five league championship games from 1997-2004.

Weaknesses: Clint Cochran, Aaron Opelt and Brandon Summers all hope to claim a quarterback job that figures to remain a work in progress. Some semblance of consistency and stability must be achieved if the Rockets are to rebound from a 5-7 season. Another major question will be the team's ability to shake off the psychological damage done by a point-shaving scandal that rocked the program during spring practice.

Bottom line: Toledo's days as the class program of the MAC West apparently have ended. Now the Rockets will struggle to climb back up the mountain. The starting point has to be improving the quarterback play that has been a trademark of the Rockets' spread offense but was so lacking in last season's collapse.

Starters back: Offense 8, defense 8
Best players: SS Barry Church*, 6-3/216, So.; OT John Greco*, 6-5/318, Sr.; FS Tyrrell Herbert, 6-2/190, Sr.; TE Chris Hopkins, 6-5/255, Sr.; WR Nick Moore, 6-4/192, Jr.; RB Jalen Parmele*, 6-0/222, Sr.

Impact newcomers: LB Disi Alexander, 6-2/200, Fr.; QB Travis Cadet, 6-0/196, Fr.; QB D.J. Lenahan, 6-3/190, Fr.

Stadium: Glass Bowl (artificial, 26,248)

Site: Toledo, Ohio

Coach: Tom Amstutz (50-25, 6 years, 27 at school)

Offensive coordinator: John Shannon (3rd year, 5th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Tim Rose (3rd year)

Last league title won: 2004

Last bowl appearance: 2005

2006 record: 5-7, 3-5/5th MAC West

4. Central Michigan

SN projection: 4-8

National rank: 90

Strengths: QB Dan LeFevour passed for 3,031 yards and 26 touchdowns after starting last season No. 2 on the depth chart. The offensive line took two big hits but still should rank among the best in the MAC with three-year starters T Andrew Hartline and G Eric Tunney. The Chippewas also return experienced playmakers at LB with Red Keith and Ike Brown.

Weaknesses: Central Michigan's running attack revolves around inconsistent TB Ontario Sneed. The pass coverage also must get better after a season in which the Chippewas allowed 215 passing yards per game and a conference-high 23 TD passes.

Bottom line: Much has changed for Central Michigan, which won the MAC championship last year and defeated Middle Tennessee in the Motor City Bowl. Two of its most important players, DE Daniel Bazuin and OT Joe Staley, are off to the NFL, and coach Brian Kelly left for Cincinnati. The Chippewas have some nice components around which to build, but they'll probably need a year of adjustment under new coach Butch Jones.

Starters back: Offense 7, defense 7

Best players: WR Bryan Anderson*, 6-5/194, So.; OT Andrew Hartline*, 6-5/297, Jr.; LB Red Keith*, 5-11/242, Sr.; QB Dan LeFevour, 6-3/226, So.; G Eric Tunney*, 6-3/291, Sr.

Impact newcomers: DT Josh Allison, 6-2/245, Fr.; LB Nick Bellore, 6-1/234, Fr.; TE J.J. Watt, 6-5/240, Fr.

Stadium: Kelly/Shorts (artificial, 30,199)

Site: Mount Pleasant, Mich.

Coach: Butch Jones (1st year, 8th at school)

Offensive coordinator: Mike Bajakian (1st year, 3rd at school)

Defensive coordinator: Tim Banks (1st year)

Last league title won: 2006

Last year not in a bowl: 2005

2006 record: 10-4, 7-1/1st MAC West

MAC championship game: Beat Ohio, 31-10

Motor City Bowl: Beat Middle Tennessee, 31-14

5. Northern Illinois

SN projection: 4-8

National rank: 91

Strengths: The team is experienced and has solid depth at LB with Tim McCarthy patrolling the middle and Phil Brown returning on the outside after missing the 2006 season with an injury. There is not a standout in the secondary or at wide receiver, but both of those positions have good depth and should promote strong competition for playing time.

Weaknesses: Untested QB Dan Nicholson will be asked to assume a leadership role for an offense that loses a significant playmaker in TB Garrett Wolfe. TBs Montell Clanton and Justin Anderson will get a chance to step up for the Huskies, whose streak of eight consecutive seasons with a 1,000-yard rusher could be in jeopardy.

Bottom line: Don't write off Northern Illinois as a challenger for the West title. The Huskies have finished first or second in the West in five of the last six seasons, and they've played in a bowl game two of the past three years. No team in the conference can match their streak of seven straight winning seasons. It wouldn't be a huge stretch for Northern Illinois to achieve those plateaus again, especially if they can piece together a productive offense.

Starters back: Offense 6, defense 6

Best players: C Eddie Adamski, 6-2/286, So.; WR Britt Davis, 6-2/205,

Jr.; DE Larry English*, 6-3/255, Jr.; LB Tim McCarthy*, 6-0/232, Jr.; K Chris Nendick*, 5-11/183, Sr.

Impact newcomers: CB Chase Carter, 5-11/172, Jr. (JC); DB Mike Sobol, 6-0/200, Fr.; TB Alan Smith, 5-10/190, Fr.

Stadium: Huskie (artificial, 28,000)

Site: DeKalb, Ill.

Coach: Joe Novak (61-66, 11 years; 15 at school)

Offensive coordinator: Roy Wittke (1st year)

Defensive coordinator: Denny Doornbos (4th year, 5th at school)

Last league title won: 1983

Last year not in a bowl: 2005

2006 record: 7-6, 5-3/T3rd MAC West

Poinsettia Bowl: Lost to TCU, 37-7

6. Eastern Michigan

SN projection: 1-11

National rank: 116

Strengths: DT Jason Jones ranks among the most disruptive forces in the conference. And he's even more motivated this season after league coaches kept him off the all-conference first team in 2006. Jones, DT Josh Hunt and LB Daniel Holtzclaw give the Eagles a strong presence in the middle of what could be a solid defense.

Weaknesses: The Eagles had a difficult time choosing between Andy Schmitt and Tyler Jones at QB last season, an unfortunate dilemma that most likely will carry over into 2007. Injuries and inconsistency plagued the position last year, and the team needs one of them to emerge as a strong leader and playmaker. To illustrate the dire condition of EMU's running game, Schmitt (461 yards) and Jones (310) were the top two rushers last season.

Bottom line: The Eagles were 1-11 last season (they beat Toledo), primarily because of their inability to develop a winning mind-set. They repeatedly failed to make important plays in the fourth quarter of games, leading to six losses by a touchdown or less. The priority for Eastern Michigan this season is to overcome that psychological shortcoming and to get better at making plays, a challenge that falls squarely on the shoulders of the quarterback.

Starters back: Offense 7, defense 9

Best players: Daniel Holtzclaw, 6-1/230, Jr.; DT Josh Hunt, 6-4/280, Sr.; DT Jason Jones*, 6-5/262, Sr.; LB Darran Matthews, 6-0/220, Sr.; QB Andy Schmitt, 6-3/221, So.

Impact newcomers: G Darrell Davis-Budanauro, 6-4/350, Fr.; TB Dwayne Priest, 5-9/185, Fr.

Stadium: Rynearson (artificial, 30,200)

Site: Ypsilanti, Mich.

Coach: Jeff Genyk (9-25, 3 years)

Offensive coordinator: Scott Isphording (1st year, 4th at school)

Defensive coordinator: Jay Peterson (4th year)

Last league title won: 1987

Last bowl appearance: 1987

2006 record: 1-11, 1-7/6th MAC West

Projected finish



Call it parity. Or inconsistency. Or the inability to sustain success. Call it whatever you want, but predicting a Sun Belt champion is a little like picking a trifecta at the Kentucky Derby.

After a four-year title reign by North Texas, a trifecta is exactly what the Sun Belt got in 2005 when lightly re-garded Louisiana-Lafayette, Louisiana-Monroe and Arkansas State all rose up to claim a share of the title. In 2006, Middle Tennessee did the rising to share title honors with Troy.

The reason for this sudden burst of parity is really very simple: Experience matters.

Middle Tennessee was loaded with veterans last year. So was Troy. Both received bowl bids, giving the conference hopes of landing multiple postseason berths for the third time in four years.

Troy and Arkansas State have lots of returning starters. So does Florida Atlantic. Middle Tennessee has veterans but also inexperience at critical positions.

Other clubs are close enough that one important piece—like quarterback Omar Haugabook provided for Troy last season—could make the difference in a conference race that is turning into a free-for-all.

BEST PLAYERS

Omar Haugabook, QB, Troy. He took the Sun Belt by storm last season and walked away with a hefty load of postseason honors. He's accurate and mobile, which

equates to perfect in a wide-open passing attack.

Damon Nickson, FS, Middle Tennessee.

He made an unexpected impact last year as an all-conference defensive back and kick returner. Nickson is instinctive and athletic—a game-breaker in both positions.

Tyrell Johnson, SS, Arkansas State. He's

a hard-hitting tackling machine and a prime candidate for defensive player of the year honors. Johnson also is a ballhawk who has added muscle to a nice frame.

Calvin Dawson, RB, Louisiana-Monroe.

Dawson is a tough runner who didn't go down easily last season en route to the Sun Belt rushing title. He's similar physically to NFL runners Tatum Bell and J.J. Arrington.

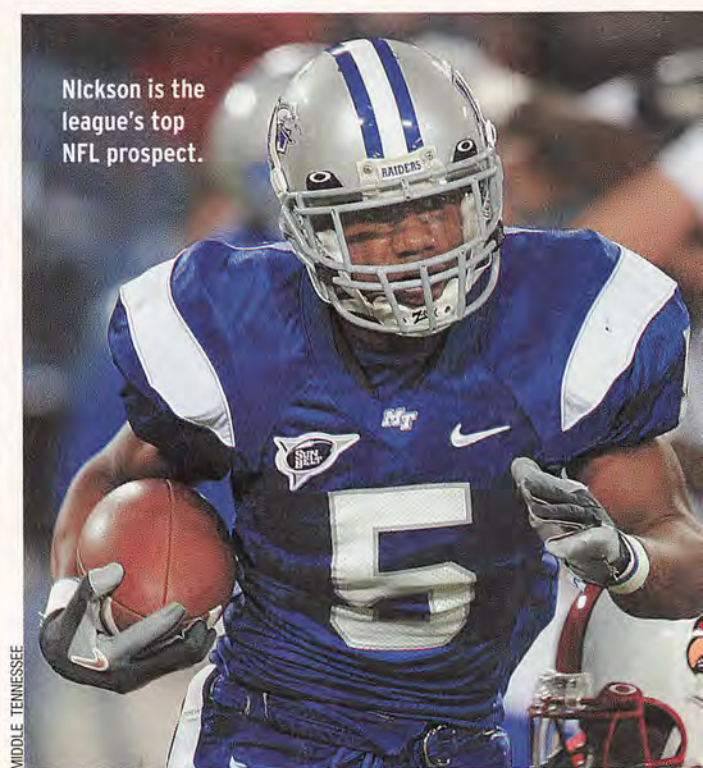
PLAYERS WHO MUST STEP UP

Joe Craddock, QB, Middle Tennessee.

With the departure of Clint Marks, Craddock probably will claim the starting job. He threw only 24 passes in mop-up duty last season, which means the pressure will be on him to mature quickly.

Rusty Smith, QB, Florida Atlantic. Either Smith or Sean Clayton needs to take the offensive reins and throw the ball well enough to open running room for an offense that averaged 109.4 rushing yards

Nickson is the league's top NFL prospect.



MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Honor roll

- Best pregame atmosphere: Louisiana-Lafayette
- Best home-field advantage: Louisiana-Lafayette
- Best stadium: Movie Gallery Stadium, Troy
- Best fans: Louisiana-Lafayette
- Best mascot: Ragin' Cajun
- Strongest arm: Kinsmon Lancaster, La.-Monroe
- Most dangerous scrambler: Omar Haugabook, Troy
- Fastest running back: Desmond Gee, Middle Tennessee
- Most physical receiver: LaGregory Sapp, Louisiana-Monroe
- Surest hands: Gary Banks, Troy
- Most dominant O-lineman: Kyle Cunningham, La.-Monroe
- Most disruptive end: Erik Walden, Middle Tennessee
- Best run-stuffing tackle: Trevor Jenkins, Middle Tennessee
- Hardest-hitting linebacker: Frantz Joseph, Florida Atlantic
- Best cover man: Lionell Singleton, Florida International
- Top NFL prospect: Damon Nickson, FS, Middle Tennessee

ASCENDING ^

Florida Atlantic. The Owls were a pleasant surprise last season and return nine starters on offense and 10 on defense. There's plenty of experience and talent, so the league's worst run defense should get better. If the quarterback situation can be resolved, FAU could make some noise.

DESCENDING v

Middle Tennessee. This will not be a bad team, but its status among the front-runners could be in jeopardy because of the skill position players who must be replaced. Gone are quarterback Clint Marks, running back Eugene Gross and linebacker J.K. Sabb, among others.

All-conference

Offense

Pos.	Name, school
WR	Gary Banks, Troy (6-1, 196, Jr.)
WR	LaGregory Sapp, La.-Monroe (6-3, 200, Jr.)
TE	Zeek Zacharie, La.-Monroe (6-3, 230, Jr.)
T	Franklin Dunbar, Middle Tenn. (6-5, 354, Jr.)
T	Kyle Cunningham, La.-Monroe (6-4, 295, Sr.)
G	Jarrod Smith, Fla. Atlantic (6-2, 258, Sr.)
G	Chris Jamison, Troy (6-3, 285, Jr.)
C	Adam Hill, La.-Monroe (6-1, 325, Sr.)
QB	Omar Haugabook, Troy (6-2, 220, Sr.)
RB	Tyrell Fenroy, La.-Lafayette (5-10, 180, Jr.)
RB	Calvin Dawson, La.-Monroe (5-10, 207, Sr.)

Defense

Pos.	Name, school
E	Erik Walden, Middle Tenn. (6-2, 238, Sr.)
E	Kenny Mainor, Troy (6-4, 216, Jr.)
T	Trevor Jenkins, Middle Tenn. (6-1, 285, Jr.)
T	Jervonte Jackson, Fla. Atlantic (6-3, 280, Jr.)
LB	Cergile Sincere, Fla. Atlantic (6-0, 215, Sr.)
LB	Koby McKinnon, Arkansas State (6-3, 215, Sr.)
LB	Maurice Holman, North Texas (6-1, 225, Sr.)
CB	Leodis McKelvin, Troy (5-11, 187, Sr.)
CB	Lionell Singleton, Fla. International (5-10, 175, Sr.)
S	Damon Nickson, Middle Tenn. (6-0, 177, Sr.)
S	Tyrell Johnson, Arkansas State (6-1, 197, Sr.)

Specialists

Pos.	Name, school
K	Cole Wilson, La.-Monroe (5-10, 190, Sr.)
P	Truman Spencer, North Texas (6-3, 200, Jr.)
KR	Damon Nickson, Middle Tenn. (6-0, 177, Sr.)

Players of the year

Offense: Omar Haugabook, QB, Troy
Defense: Tyrell Johnson, S, Arkansas State

Newcomers of the year

Offense: Marquise Roll, WR, Florida International
Defense: Scooter Rogers, CB, La.-Lafayette

in 2006. Smith finished strongly after replacing the injured Clayton.

Corey Leonard, QB, Arkansas State. After sharing time last season as a red-shirt freshman, Leonard appears ready to take all of the snaps. The Indians already have the league's best ground game; they only need Leonard to provide balance through the air.

NEWCOMERS TO WATCH

Andrew Harrington, LB, Middle Tennessee. The Blue Raiders have three openings at linebacker, and Harrington, a junior college transfer, appears capable of making an immediate impact.

Dion Gales, DT, Troy. The prize of the Sun Belt recruiting season, Gales was coveted by many bigger programs, both after his high school and junior college careers. The Trojans are deep on the line, but Gales is too big and good to keep off the field.

Scooter Rogers, CB, Louisiana-Lafayette. Junior college star Rogers should make an immediate impact in a secondary that intercepted only five passes and allowed opponents to complete 61.7 percent of their throws.

BEST COACH

Larry Blakeney, Troy. The 16-year veteran is a master at blending players and assistants into his productive system. Last season, for example, Blakeney allowed new coordina-

5 years and counting

School	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	Total
Florida Atlantic	5-7 ^a	2-9 ^a	9-3	11-3	2-9	29-31
Troy	8-5 [*]	4-7	7-5 ^a	6-6	4-8	29-31
North Texas	3-9	2-9	7-5 [*]	9-4 [*]	8-5 [*]	29-32
Arkansas State	6-6	6-6 [*]	3-8	5-7	6-7	26-34
Middle Tennessee	7-6 [*]	4-7	5-6	4-8	4-8	24-35
La.-Lafayette	6-6	6-5 [*]	4-7	4-8	3-9	23-35
Florida International	0-12 ^b	5-6 ^a	3-7	2-10	5-6	20-41
La.-Monroe	4-8	5-6 [*]	5-6	1-11	3-9	18-40

^{*}Conference champ ^aJoined conference ^bJoined Division I-A

tor Tony Franklin to install a fresh offense and then signed junior college star Omar Haugabook to make it work.

BEST STAFF

Arkansas State. Steve Roberts brought nine assistants with him to Jonesboro in 2002, and eight of them still are there. The group has stuck together and found success, including a share of the 2005 league title and a respectable 6-6 record last season in a rebuilding year. This could be the season the staff's dedication really pays off.

ON THE HOT SEAT

Todd Dodge, North Texas. Job security is not an issue, but skeptics will be watching to see if the Texas high school coaching legend can restore the magic that recently eluded his predecessor, Darrell Dickey. Dodge, a former North Texas assistant, will use a spread offense that helped him post a 79-1 record in a five-season stretch at Southlake Carroll High. There will be a learning curve—for both him and the players.

GAMES TO WATCH

Middle Tennessee at Florida Atlantic, Sept. 1. Two

teams in the championship hunt hope to separate themselves in the season—and conference—opener.

Troy at Louisiana-Lafayette, Sept. 22. The Trojans open league play in the toughest venue after nonconference games against Arkansas, Florida and Oklahoma State.

Troy at Arkansas State, Oct. 27. The Sun Belt title favorites meet in Jonesboro. The Indians scored in the final minute to win last season at Troy.

BOWL BOUND

Troy and Arkansas State. The Trojans have the Sun Belt's best quarterback and a veteran defense. But they might head to the New Orleans Bowl with a 6-6 record because of a nightmarish nonleague schedule. The Indians have an easier nonconference load and should get to seven wins.



Dawson

LOUISIANA-MONROE

Recruiting buzz Ranking the teams

School	Biggest prize	Instant impact
1. Troy	DL Dion Gales, 6-6/275	WR Kenard Burton, 5-9/170
2. Arkansas State	OL Paul Henry, 6-8/280	DE Stanley Porter, 6-3/235
3. Florida International	OL Shaquan Hicks, 6-2/324	DB Devin Parrish, 6-0/185
4. Middle Tennessee	DL Mark Fisher, 6-4/275	OL Jake Padrick, 6-0/290
5. Louisiana-Monroe	DE Jordan Landry, 6-3/200	DB Jared Berry, 6-0/205
6. North Texas	LB Marquese Davis, 6-1/230	RB Cam Montgomery, 6-2/195
7. Louisiana-Lafayette	DE Jermaine Rodgers, 6-3/230	LB Grant Fleming, 6-3/210
8. Florida Atlantic	WR Darian Williams, 6-3/175	RB Xavier Stinson, 5-9/220

Rankings by Rivals.com

UNIT rankings	Backfield	Receivers	O-line	Overall	D-line	LBs	DBs	Overall	Special teams	Coaching
Arkansas State	4	4	7	6	6	2	1	2	5	2
Florida Atlantic	5	3	5	5	3	3	3	3	7	5
Florida International	8	7	8	8	8	8	7	8	8	7
Louisiana-Lafayette	3	6	2	2	5	5	6	6	3	4
Louisiana-Monroe	2	1	1	1	4	7	8	7	2	6
Middle Tennessee	7	2	4	4	1	6	5	4	6	3
North Texas	6	8	3	7	7	4	4	5	4	8
Troy	1	5	6	3	2	1	2	1	1	1

Rankings by SN's Tom Dienhart with input from correspondents.

Returning leaders

RUSHING Player, school, class	G	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	Long	TD	YPG	NCAA rk.
1. Calvin Dawson, La.-Monroe, Sr.	12	213	1,210	5.7	66	11	100.8	23
2. Tyrell Fenroy, La.-Lafayette, Jr.	12	233	1,197	5.1	57	10	99.8	24
3. Reggie Arnold, Arkansas State, So.	12	209	1,076	5.1	31	4	89.7	32
4. Kenny Cattouse, Troy, Sr.	12	168	810	4.8	25	4	67.5	64
5. Charles Pierre, Florida Atlantic, Jr.	12	207	756	3.7	31	5	63.0	81

PASSING Player, school, class	G	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Int.	Yds.	Yds./cmp.	TD	Rating	NCAA rk.
1. Omar Haugabook, Troy, Sr.	13	241	393	61.3	17	2,401	10.0	21	121.6	45
2. Kinsmon Lancaster, La.-Monroe, Jr.	12	142	250	56.8	14	1,789	12.6	7	115.0	76
3. Corey Leonard, Arkansas State, So.	12	109	222	49.1	8	1,321	12.1	8	103.8	97
4. Rusty Smith, Florida Atlantic, So.	12	108	194	55.7	8	1,285	11.9	6	113.3	—
5. Sean Clayton, Florida Atlantic, Sr.	11	78	154	50.6	6	926	11.9	5	104.1	—

RECEIVING Player, school, class	G	Rec.	Yds.	Long	TD	RPG	YPR	YPG	NCAA rk.
1. Gary Banks, Troy, Sr.	13	68	603	58	8	5.2	8.9	46.4	127
2. LaGregory Sapp, La.-Monroe, Jr.	12	43	796	64	3	3.6	18.5	66.3	—
3. Derrick Smith, La.-Lafayette, Jr.	12	41	551	51	1	3.4	13.4	45.9	—
4. Bobby Williams, Middle Tennessee, Jr.	13	36	378	55	1	2.8	10.5	29.1	—
5. Frantz Simeon, Florida Atlantic, Jr.	12	35	590	54	1	2.9	16.9	49.2	—



TROY TROJANS

OFFENSE The spread offense was a big success in its first year under offensive coordinator Tony Franklin. The Trojans were among the conference leaders in scoring and passing offense, but they saved their best for last in a 41-17 rout of Rice in the New Orleans Bowl. Quarterback Omar Haugabook, the conference player of the year, threw for 2,401 yards and 21 touchdowns and has his top receiver (Gary Banks) and running back (Kenny Cattouse) returning. But his line returns only left guard Chris Jamison. Transfer Dion Small is slated to fill one of those open slots.

DEFENSE A unit that returns eight starters features Kenny Mainor, a speedy end who registered 6½ of the team's 36 sacks. Shawn Todd and Brandon Lang also return, giving Troy three of the top ends in the conference. The Trojans also return three starters at linebacker, including Boris Lee, who broke into the lineup as a freshman and finished third in tackles. Troy will have to overcome the loss of safety Brannon Condren, its leading tackler. And it will have to improve against the pass after finishing last in the league in 2006.

SPECIAL TEAMS Leodis McKelvin is one of the top return men in the country. It's a job he has held for what seems like forever, and he easily will eclipse 3,000 career all-purpose yards during his final season. Kicker Greg Whibbs must improve his accuracy after hitting only 11-of-19 field goal tries in 2006.

BOTTOM LINE A more seasoned defense and the league's most dangerous player put Troy in position to win a second straight Sun Belt title. Two obstacles: surviving another brutal nonconference schedule (at Arkansas, at Florida, vs. Oklahoma State, at Georgia) and piecing together an effective offensive line.

Quickhits

Stadium: Movie Gallery (artificial, 30,000)
Site: Troy, Ala.
Coach: Larry Blakeney (127-65-1, 16 years)
Offensive coordinator: Tony Franklin (2nd year)
Defensive coordinator: Jeremy Rowell (3rd year, 11th at school)
Last league title won: 2006 (tie)
Last year not in a bowl: 2005
2006 record: 8-5, 6-1/T1st Sun Belt
New Orleans Bowl: Beat Rice, 41-17

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at Arkansas	
9-8	at Florida	
9-14	at Oklahoma State*	
9-22	at La.-Lafayette	42-28
9-29	La.-Monroe	24-19
10-6	at Fla. International	26-13
10-20	North Texas	14-6
10-27	at Arkansas State	26-33
11-3	at Georgia	
11-10	at Western Kentucky	
11-20	Middle Tennessee^	21-20
12-1	Fla. Atlantic	24-17

*Friday ^Tuesday

■ Toughest game • Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Sun Belt schedule strength: 1st

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	14	Andrew Davis (5-9, 165, So.)
WR	81	Mykeal Terry (5-10, 175, Jr.)
LT	68	Will Chambliss (6-6, 292, Jr.)
LG	65	Chris Jamison (6-3, 285, Jr.)
C	75	Danny Franks (6-4, 320, So.)
RG	69	Steven Merkel (6-5, 298, Jr.)
RT	74	Dion Small (6-2, 280, Jr.)
WR	1	Cornelius Williams (6-1, 180, So.)
WR	8	Gary Banks (6-1, 196, Sr.)
QB	17	Omar Haugabook (6-2, 220, Sr.)
FB	22	Kenny Cattouse (5-10, 207, Sr.)
K	3	Greg Whibbs (5-10, 166, Sr.)
KR	34	Leodis McKelvin (5-11, 187, Sr.)

Defense

BAN	51	Kenny Mainor (6-4, 216, Jr.)
T	94	Chris Bradwell (6-5, 280, Sr.)
NT	93	Marcus Pittman (6-4, 290, Sr.)
E	25	Shawn Todd (6-3, 245, Sr.)
SLB	41	Romanique Lewis (6-2, 225, Sr.)
MLB	2	Boris Lee (6-2, 210, So.)
WLB	26	Marcus Richardson (6-3, 214, Sr.)
CB	34	Leodis McKelvin (5-11, 187, Sr.)
FS	15	Tavares Williams (6-1, 190, Jr.)
SS	20	Terence Moore (6-3, 195, Jr.)
CB	13	Elbert Mack (5-10, 168, Sr.)
P	85	Adrian Vera (6-1, 201, Sr.)
PR	34	Leodis McKelvin (5-11, 187, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman
 SN All-conference

ARKANSAS STATE INDIANS

OFFENSE Two sophomores, quarterback Corey Leonard and running back Reggie Arnold, return to an offense that should show significant improvement. The Indians allowed 37 sacks last year, a number that must improve even though the team will have three new starters on its line. If the line is better, Leonard and Arnold should be better, which is expecting a lot from Arnold, who ran for 1,076 yards in his first season. Leonard passed for 110 yards per game and had as many interceptions as TD passes (eight). He must make better decisions to make the passing game legitimate.

DEFENSE The strength of this traditionally strong unit is its secondary. Three starters return, including strong safety Tyrell Johnson, an all-conference pick last season. Johnson led the Indians in tackles and is an NFL prospect. Free safety Khayyam Burns was a turnover machine with four interceptions and two fumble recoveries. The linebackers, led by Koby McKinnon, will feel the loss of Josh Williams, who was kicked off the team for violating team rules. He will be replaced by Ben Owens, who started in 2005 while Williams served a suspension. The linebackers will have to play big because two starters up front will be new.

SPECIAL TEAMS The Indians ranked last in punt returns and kickoff coverage, and fifth in kickoff returns in the Sun Belt. Kicker Josh Arauco was accurate (12-of-16), but his longest field goal was 38 yards.

BOTTOM LINE Defense rules. But enough offense is in place to make Arkansas State a contender for a conference title and bowl game—goals that were reached only two seasons ago. The key to a postseason run will be the revamped offensive line, which must keep Leonard upright and create holes for Arnold.

Quickhits

Stadium: Indian (artificial, 30,406)
Site: Jonesboro, Ark.
Coach: Steve Roberts (26-34, 5 years; 75-67-1 overall, 13 years)
Offensive coordinator: Doug Ruse (6th year)
Defensive coordinators: Kevin Corless (6th year); Jack Curtis (6th year)
Last league title won: 2005 (tie)
Last bowl appearance: 2005
2006 record: 6-6, 4-3/T3rd Sun Belt

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	at Texas	
9-8	Memphis	26-23
9-15	SMU	9-55
9-22	at Tennessee	
10-6	at La.-Monroe	10-6
10-13	at La.-Lafayette	13-28
10-20	at Middle Tennessee	10-38
10-27	▲ Troy	33-26
11-3	Fla. International	31-6
11-10	at Fla. Atlantic	0-29
11-15	North Texas*	29-10
11-24	at Southern Miss	

*Thursday

■ Toughest game • Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Sun Belt schedule strength: 7th

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	9	Levi Dejohnette (6-0, 175, Sr.)
LT	63	Matt Mandich (6-3, 282, Jr.)
LG	60	Dominic Padra (6-3, 288, So.)
C	65	Heath Lockley (6-0, 285, Sr.)
RG	58	Matt Reibe (6-3, 300, Jr.)
RT	76	Kyle Koets (6-4, 292, Jr.)
TE	85	David Johnson (6-2, 268, Jr.)
WR	6	Kevin Jones (5-10, 169, Jr.)
QB	1	Corey Leonard (6-1, 196, So.)
RB	2	Reggie Arnold (5-9, 217, So.)
FB	34	Danny McNeal (6-1, 227, Fr.)
K	89	Josh Arauco (5-9, 193, So.)
KR	3	Darren Toney (5-11, 185, Sr.)

Defense

E	98	Alex Carrington (6-5, 267, So.)
NT	91	Curtis Bonds (6-4, 285, Sr.)
T	79	Prince Hickman (6-1, 289, Sr.)
E	44	Brian Flagg (6-2, 243, Jr.)
SLB	37	Koby McKinnon (6-3, 215, Sr.)
MLB	48	Ben Owens (6-2, 223, Jr.)
WLB	31	Matt Taylor (6-3, 212, So.)
CB	20	Montis Harrison (5-10, 170, Sr.)
FS	21	Khayyam Burns (6-0, 184, Sr.)
SS	16	Tyrell Johnson (6-1, 197, Sr.)
CB	3	Darren Toney (5-11, 185, Sr.)
P	13	Brett Shrable (6-2, 226, Jr.)
PR	6	Kevin Jones (5-10, 169, Jr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman
 SN All-conference

FLA. ATLANTIC		FLA. INTERNATIONAL		LA-LAFAYETTE		LA-MONROE		MIDDLE TENNESSEE		NORTH TEXAS	
Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent	Date	Opponent
9-1	at Middle Tennessee	9-1	at Penn State	9-1	at South Carolina	8-30	Tulsa*	9-1	at Fla. Atlantic	9-1	at Oklahoma
9-8	at Oklahoma State	9-8	Maryland	9-8	Ohio	9-8	at Clemson	9-6	at Louisville*	9-8	at SMU
9-15	vs. Minnesota*	9-15	at Miami	9-15	McNeese State	9-15	at Texas A&M	9-15	at LSU	9-22	at Fla. Atlantic
9-22	at North Texas	9-22	at Kansas	9-22	at Troy	9-29	at Troy	9-20	Western Kentucky*	9-29	at Arkansas
9-29	at Kentucky	9-29	at Middle Tennessee	9-29	at UCF	10-6	at Arkansas State	9-29	Fla. International	10-6	at La-Lafayette
10-6	South Florida	10-6	Troy	10-6	North Texas	10-13	at North Texas	10-6	Virginia	10-13	at La-Monroe
10-20	at La-Lafayette	10-20	at La-Monroe	10-13	at Arkansas State	10-20	Fla. International	10-13	at Memphis	10-20	at Troy
10-27	at La-Monroe	10-27	at Arkansas	10-20	Fla. Atlantic	10-27	at Fla. Atlantic	10-20	at Arkansas State	10-27	at Middle Tennessee
11-10	at Arkansas State	11-3	at Arkansas State	11-3	at Tennessee	11-3	Middle Tennessee	10-27	at North Texas	11-10	Navy
11-17	at Florida	11-17	La-Lafayette	11-10	at Middle Tennessee	11-10	Grambling State	11-3	at La-Monroe	11-15	at Arkansas State*
11-24	at Fla. International	11-24	at Fla. Atlantic	11-17	at Fla. International	11-17	at Alabama	11-10	at La-Lafayette	11-24	Western Kentucky
12-1	at Troy	12-1	at North Texas	11-24	at La-Monroe	11-24	at La-Lafayette	11-20	at Troy*	12-1	at Fla. International
*at Miami						*Thursday		*Thursday *Tuesday		*Thursday	
SBC schedule strength: 6th		SBC schedule strength: 2nd		SBC schedule strength: 8th		SBC schedule strength: 3rd		SBC schedule strength: 4th		SBC schedule strength: 5th	

■ Toughest game ● Must win ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

3. MIDDLE TENNESSEE

SN projection: 5-7

National rank: 89

Strengths: A defensive line that notched 22 sacks and 54 tackles for loss returns four starters. Erik Walden (school-record 11½ sacks), Tavares Jones and Sean Mosley form the league's best trio of ends. DT Trevor Jenkins is the run-stuffer.

Weaknesses: Experience is short at key positions, especially quarterback. Junior Joe Craddock is the favorite to replace Clint Marks, a three-year starter. The problem area on defense is linebacker; all three 2006 starters are gone.

Bottom line: Don't be surprised if the Blue Raiders are in the title hunt. But don't be shocked, either, if inexperience at quarterback and linebacker and a leadership void on offense prove costly.

Starters back: Offense 6, defense 6

Best players: LT Franklin Dunbar*, 6-5/350, Jr.; DT Trevor Jenkins*, 6-1/285, Jr.; DE Tavares Jones, 6-2/242, Sr.; FS/KR Damon Nickson*, 6-0/177, Sr.; DE Erik Walden*, 6-2/238, Sr.

Impact newcomers: LB Andrew Harrington, 6-2/220, Jr.; LB Ivon Hickmon, 6-1/215, Jr.; C Jake Padrick, 6-0/297, Fr.

Stadium: Floyd (artificial, 30,788)

Site: Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Coach: Rick Stockstill (7-6, 1 year). **Offensive coordinator:** G.A. Mangus (2nd year).

Defensive coordinator: Manny Diaz (2nd year).

Last league title won: 2006 (tie)

Last year not in a bowl: 2005

2006 record: 7-6, 6-1/T1st Sun Belt

Motor City Bowl: Lost to Central Michigan, 31-14

4. LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE

SN projection: 5-7

National rank: 94

Strengths: One of the Sun Belt's top offenses will have to replace QB Jerry Babb, a job many assumed would go to Babb's backup, Michael Desormeaux. But new coordinator Blake Anderson has declared the race wide open. Not so the feature back job, which goes to 1,197-yard rusher Tyrell Fenroy.

Weaknesses: Kevin Fouquier jumps from FIU's league-best defense to coordinate the Ragin' Cajuns, who need to pressure QBs and take the heat off a beleaguered secondary.

Bottom line: Last year's preseason favorites struggled. But with starters returning at running back and receiver, the Ragin' Cajuns can be a factor in a wide-open league.

Starters back: Offense 7, defense 5

Best players: LB Brenton Burkhalter, 6-0/221, Jr.; RB Tyrell Fenroy*, 5-10/180, Jr.; DE Rodney Hardaway, 6-3/255, Sr.; OT Jesse Newman, 6-4/301, Sr.

Impact newcomers: CB Justin Branden, 6-1/185, Jr.; LB Richard Brooks, 6-1/205, Fr.; CB Scooter Rogers, 6-1/200, Jr.

Stadium: Cajun Field (grass, 31,000)

Site: Lafayette, La.

Coach: Rickey Bustle (23-35, 5 years).

Offensive coordinator: Blake Anderson (1st year).

Defensive coordinator: Kevin Fouquier (1st year).

Last league title won: 2005 (tie)

Last bowl appearance: 1970

2006 record: 6-6, 3-4/T5th Sun Belt

5. FLORIDA ATLANTIC

SN projection: 3-7

National rank: 101

Strengths: An unexpected 5-7 season has built momentum. The Owls have talent, especially on a defense that returns DE Josh Pinnick, LB Cergile Sincere and SS Kris Bartels. **Weaknesses:** Either Rusty Smith or Sean Clayton needs to claim the QB job, and the running game needs to improve.

Bottom line: The Owls were a surprise last year and shouldn't be overlooked. A veteran core should have the know-how in close games and on the road.

Starters back: Offense 9, defense 10

Best players: DT Jervonte Jackson*, 6-3/280, Jr.; DE Josh Pinnick, 6-5/240, Sr.; LB Cergile Sincere*, 6-0/215, Sr.; G Jarrid Smith*, 6-2/258, Sr.

Impact newcomers: WR Lestar Jean, 6-3/195, Fr.; RB Xavier Stinson, 5-9/225, Fr.

Stadium: Lockhart (grass, 20,000)

Site: Boca Raton, Fla.

Coach: Howard Schnellenberger (33-37, 6 years; 133-114-3 overall, 22 years). **Offensive coordinator:** Gary Nord (3rd season, 3rd at school). **Defensive coordinator:** Kirk Hoza (7th season).

Last league title won: None

Last bowl appearance: None

2006 record: 5-7, 4-3/T3rd Sun Belt

6. LOUISIANA-MONROE

SN projection: 3-9

National rank: 111

Strengths: The Warhawks return key pieces from the Sun Belt's top offense. RB Calvin Dawson, who ran for 1,210 yards and 11 TDs, will operate behind the league's best line. QB Kinsmon Lancaster will throw again to WR LaGregory Sapp and TE Zeek Zacharie.

Weaknesses: The Warhawks ranked last in defense and lose their two best players—S Kevin Payne and CB Chaz Williams. Putting pressure on passers will be a priority.

Bottom line: The offense is good enough to outscore opponents. Minimal defensive improvement could put the Warhawks in title contention.

Starters back: Offense 11, defense 6

Best players: OT Kyle Cunningham*, 6-4/295, Sr.; RB Calvin Dawson*, 5-10/207, Sr.; C Adam Hill*, 6-1/325, Sr.; WR LaGregory Sapp*, 6-3/200, Jr.; K Cole Wilson*, 5-10/190, Sr.; TE Zeek Zacharie*, 6-3/230, Jr.

Impact newcomers: LB Alvin Jordan, 6-2/225, Fr.; LB C.C. Carpenter, 6-0/230, Fr.; QB Brice Beck, 6-3/245, Jr.

Stadium: Malone (grass, 30,427)

Site: Monroe, La.

Coach: Charlie Weatherbie (15-31, 4 years; 60-95 overall, 14 years). **Offensive coordinators:** Steve Farmer (1st year, 4th at school); Nate Kaczor (1st year, 2nd at school). **Defensive coordinator:** Kim Dameron (3rd year).

Last league title won: 2005 (tie)

Last bowl appearance: None

2006 record: 4-8, 3-4/T5th, Sun Belt

7. NORTH TEXAS

SN projection: 3-9

National rank: 113

Strengths: All but one starter returns to a defense that will have to adjust from last year's 3-4 to new coordinator Ron Mendoza's 4-3 scheme. Experience should ease that transition, especially with playmakers at every position.

Weaknesses: The Mean Green will switch to a spread offense, but there probably aren't enough pieces to pull it off. Only three receivers in spring drills were on scholarship, and quarterbacks who guided the league's worst pass offense are being asked to throw, throw, throw.

Bottom line: The defense will have to stiff-

en while a run-first, play-action offense transitions into a passing attack. The scheme worked for new coach Todd Dodge in the Texas high school ranks, but North Texas will need more time.

Starters back: Offense 5, defense 10

Best players: DE Jeremiah Chapman, 6-4/255, Sr.; LB Maurice Holman*, 6-1/225, Sr.; WR Brandon Jackson, 5-10/175, Sr.; P Truman Spencer*, 6-3/200, Jr.; S Aaron Weathers, 5-11/198, Sr.

Impact newcomers: QB Giovanni Vizza, 6-1/195, Fr.; WR Breece Johnson, 6-0/175, Fr.

Stadium: Fouts Field (artificial, 30,500)

Site: Denton, Texas

Coach: Todd Dodge (1st year, 3rd at school). **Offensive coordinator:** Todd Ford (1st year). **Defensive coordinator:** Ron Mendoza (1st year).

Last league title won: 2004

Last bowl appearance: 2004

2006 record: 3-9, 2-5/7th Sun Belt

8. FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL

SN projection: 0-12

National rank: 119

Strengths: The Golden Panthers are getting a fresh start after an 0-12 disaster that was compounded by the infamous brawl against Miami. New coach Mario Cristobal preaches discipline.

Weaknesses: The key departures are from a defense that led the Sun Belt last year and at quarterback, receiver and tight end on offense. Some big holes will have to be filled.

Bottom line: This is a rebuilding season. Cristobal knows Dade County high schools, and the Miami area produces enough talent to get FIU on the winning track.

Starters back: Offense 8, defense 7

Best players: NT Roland Clarke, 6-4/300, Sr.; OT Andrew Leavine, 6-5/270, So.; RB Julian Reams, 5-11/202, Jr.; CB Lionell Singleton*, 5-10/175, Jr.; FS Jeremiah Weatherspoon, 6-2/211, Jr.

Impact newcomers: DT Curtis Bryant, 6-3/270, Fr.; CB Devin Parris, 6-0/185, Fr.

Stadium: FIU. **Site:** Miami.

Coach: Mario Cristobal (1st year). **Offensive coordinator:** James Coley (1st year). **Defensive coordinator:** Phil Galiano (1st year).

Last league title won: None

Last bowl appearance: None

2006 record: 0-12, 0-7/8th Sun Belt

*SN All-conference

FIGHTING IRISH

The Irish should find a way to reverse their schedule. Playing four of their first six away from home with a roster that loses 13 of last year's starters, including all but three on offense, isn't a good way to build momentum. By season's end—when the Irish plays five of six at home—this will be a good team, but a BCS invitation could be hard to wrangle, even for Notre Dame.

OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY Charlie Weis is a renowned quarterbacks mentor, but he understands the need for balance. Despite having Brady Quinn, a Heisman finalist, at quarterback last season, the Irish had only 48 fewer rushing than passing attempts. With a new quarterback behind the line, it will be interesting to see whether Notre Dame becomes more of a running team.

SKILL POSITIONS There will be a new quarterback; we're just not sure who he'll be. Evan Sharpley, Quinn's backup last season, has the most experience. Demetrius Jones is nimble, which would be helpful playing behind an inexperienced line. Strong-armed Zach Frazer played as well as anyone in the spring. Then there's mega-recruit Jimmy Clausen. Regardless of who's at quarterback, it's important that David Grimes, the No. 3 wide receiver last season, steps up with Jeff Samardzija and Rhema McKnight gone. Quick George West isn't big, but he has big-play capability. Tight end John Carlson, a Mackey Award finalist last season, is productive (13.5-yard average) for someone at his position. The backfield loses Darius Walker and his 1,267 rushing yards. Travis Thomas, who is back at tailback

Quick hits

Stadium: Notre Dame (grass, 80,795).
Site: South Bend, Ind.
Coach: Charlie Weis

(19-6, 2 years)

Offensive coordinator:
Michael Haywood (3rd year)

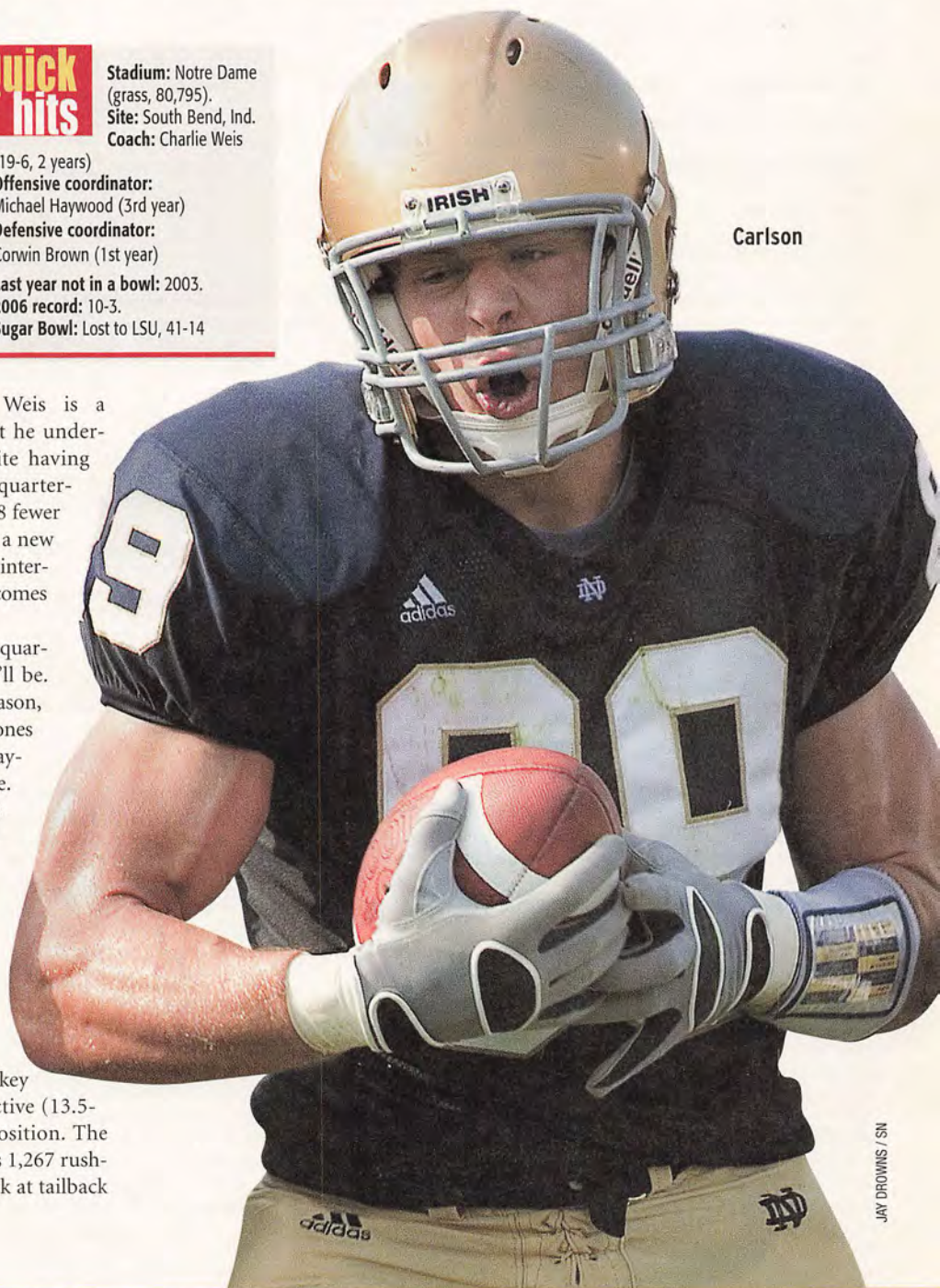
Defensive coordinator:
Corwin Brown (1st year)

Last year not in a bowl: 2003.

2006 record: 10-3.

Sugar Bowl: Lost to LSU, 41-14

Carlson



JAY DROWINS / SN

2-POINT conversion
GET IT DONE OR ELSE

1 WR David Grimes. The junior caught 26 passes and scored twice last year, but with Jeff Samardzija and Rhema McKnight gone, it's up to Grimes to emerge as a downfield threat in Notre Dame's passing attack.

2 NT Chris Stewart. With the Irish moving to a 3-4, Stewart, who moved from the offensive line this spring, will try to be the plug up front. Stewart (6-5, 340) has the perfect size for the job but lacks experience.

A pro scout says ...

I don't know much about **Jimmy Clausen**, but I've seen **Zach Frazer**, and he would play for a lot of schools. Big kid, stands tall in the pocket, strong arm. Don't be surprised if he wins that job. ... What hurts that team more than anything is their lack of physicality on both interiors. Especially the middle three on offense. ... LB **Maurice Crum** has all the physical tools, but he's constantly out of position—and he still led them in tackles. ... The secondary has been atrocious. I saw some good things with CB **Darrin Walls**, but he didn't get on the field enough.

after a stint as a linebacker, has good size and will battle promising sophomore James Aldridge, who has excellent cutting ability for someone his size, and freshman Armando Allen, an early enrollee who has blazing speed and enough strength to break tackles.

OFFENSIVE LINE Only two linemen with starting experience—center John Sullivan and tackle Sam Young—return, but coaches are high on the team's young linemen, most notably guards Eric Olsen and Dan Wenger and tackle Matt Carufel. It might take some time to develop, but this likely will be a good unit by midseason.

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY After two years of seeing his defense trampled by any offense with a pulse, Weis made a change. Out is coordinator Rick Minter, replaced by Corwin Brown, who will switch the Irish to a 3-4 configuration.

FRONT SEVEN This area certainly needs work, even to reach last year's level—which wasn't so hot. Up front, the Irish hope Trevor Laws, a tackle last year, will play a Richard Seymour-like role at end. He has the potential to make a big impact. Converted offensive lineman Chris Stewart has good size in the middle but must hold up. The other end spot is a big question, with a pair of untested upperclassmen, Justin Brown and Dwight Stephenson Jr., vying for time. Inside linebacker Maurice Crum is a tackling machine and likely will team with Joe Brockington, with strong Toryan Smith

expected to see time. Speedy Morris Richardson and John Ryan will look to take the outside jobs, with Anthony Vernaglia providing the main competition.

SECONDARY The Irish picked off only 11 passes last year and allowed 24 touchdown throws, so a sizeable improvement is needed. Big-hitting safety Tom Zbikowski returns. He's a nice backliner, but Weis would feel more secure if corners Terrail Lambert and Ambrose Wooden could provide stickier coverage. David Bruton, who has good ball skills and has impressed to date on special teams, should be the other safety. Young corners Raeshon McNeil, Darrin Walls and converted running back Munir Prince will vie for nickel work.

SPECIAL TEAMS Zbikowski is a strong punt returner, and Grimes is excellent bringing back kicks. Geoff Price set a school record by averaging 45.4 yards per punt last year. As for the placements, it's up to Ryan Burkhart, who couldn't win the job last year, walk-on Nate Whitaker or incoming freshman Brandon Walker.

COACHING STAFF Everybody knows about Weis and his Super Bowl rings, but the coach who'll attract the most attention this year is Brown, formerly the Jets' defensive backs coach. The product of the Bill Parcells coaching tree must improve a leaky defense. The rest of the staff is solid and experienced, with offensive line coach John Latina and defensive backs boss Bill Lewis among the more accomplished members.

Returning leaders

Rushing	Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
James Aldridge	37	142	3.8	0
Travis Thomas	13	78	6.0	2

Passing	Cmp./Att./Int.	Yds.	TD
Evan Sharpley	1-2-0	7	0

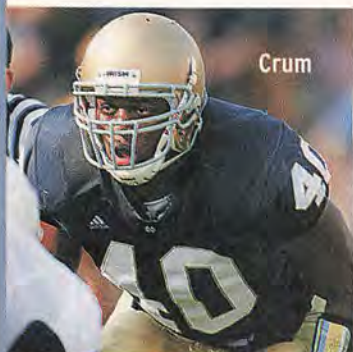
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
John Carlson	47	634	13.5	4
David Grimes	26	336	12.9	2

Kick/punt returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD
David Grimes	21	514	24.5	0

Kicking	XPM	XPA	FGM	FGA	Pts.
None					

Tackles	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL/Yds.
Maurice Crum	47	53	100	10/55
Tom Zbikowski	44	35	79	1/1
Trevor Laws	22	40	62	9.5/40

Sacks: Crum (4)
Interceptions: Terrail Lambert (3)



JAY DROWNS / SN

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score	Last 5
9-1	Georgia Tech	14-10	3-1-1
9-8	at Penn State	41-17	3-2
9-15	at Michigan	21-47	3-2
9-22	Michigan State	40-37	3-2
9-29	at Purdue	35-21	3-2
10-6	at UCLA	20-17	3-0
10-13	Boston College		1-4
10-20	USC	24-44	0-5
11-3	Navy	38-14	5-0
11-10	Air Force	39-17	4-1
11-17	Duke		2-1
11-24	at Stanford	31-10	5-0

■ Toughest game • Must win
▲ Best chance to pull an upset

>The Series USC (42-31-5): The Irish went 12-0-1 from 1983-95 vs. the Trojans but have lost eight of the last 11 meetings in the nation's best intersectional rivalry. Until ND turns the tide, it has no chance to be a legit national title contender.

>The Showdown at Michigan: This early-season battle often serves as a prelude for each team's fortunes. Weis won his first trip to Ann Arbor. If he can pull another stunner, the Irish could be hard to stop.

>The Smack Fast start? That's the key to any Irish hopes. The opener vs. a dangerous Georgia Tech team is huge. If ND can forge a 5-2 start, it has good chance to secure another glamorous bowl trip because of a soft November schedule. Duke and Stanford were 1-23 last season.

Depth chart

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	19	George West (5-8, 172, So.)
	82	Robby Parris (6-3, 201, So.)
T	72	Paul Duncan (6-7, 292, Jr.)
	71	Bartley Webb (6-7, 291, Fr.)
G	77	Mike Turkovich (6-6, 299, Jr.)
	55	Eric Olsen (6-4, 300, So.)
C	78	John Sullivan (6-4, 290, Sr.)
	67	Thomas Bemenderfer (6-5, 285, So.)
G	51	Dan Wenger (6-4, 284, Fr.)
	73	Matt Carufel (6-5, 295, So.)
T	74	Sam Young (6-8, 315, So.)
	63	Jeff Tisak (6-5, 300, Jr.)
TE	89	John Carlson (6-6, 259, Sr.)
	88	Konrad Reuland (6-6, 255, So.)
WR	11	David Grimes (5-10, 174, Jr.)
	1	D.J. Hord (6-1, 192, So.)
QB	13	Evan Sharpley (6-2, 212, So.)
	7	Jimmy Clausen* (6-3, 207, Fr.)
RB	26	Travis Thomas (6-0, 218, Sr.)
	34	James Aldridge (6-0, 213, So.)
FB	44	Asaph Schwapp (6-0, 255, So.)
	32	Luke Schmidt (6-4, 252, Jr.)
K	39	Ryan Burkhart (5-11, 196, So.)
KR	11	David Grimes (5-10, 174, Jr.)

SN All-American

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name
E	98	Trevor Laws (6-1, 295, Sr.)
	57	Dwight Stephenson (6-2, 257, Sr.)
NG	96	Pat Kuntz (6-2, 272, Jr.)
	59	Chris Stewart (6-5, 340, Fr.)
E	94	Justin Brown (6-3, 255, Jr.)
	93	Paddy Mullen (6-3, 285, Fr.)
OLB	53	Morris Richardson (6-2, 235, So.)
	42	Kevin Washington (6-1, 240, So.)
ILB	40	Maurice Crum (6-0, 225, Jr.)
	41	Scott Smith (6-3, 244, So.)
ILB	52	Joe Brockington (6-2, 235, Sr.)
	49	Toryan Smith (6-1, 244, So.)
OLB	90	John Ryan (6-5, 244, So.)
	54	Anthony Vernaglia (6-3, 233, Jr.)
CB	22	Ambrose Wooden (5-11, 190, Sr.)
	2	Darrin Walls (6-0, 180, So.)
FS	27	David Bruton (6-2, 202, Jr.)
	31	Sergio Brown (6-2, 196, So.)
SS	9	Tom Zbikowski (6-0, 210, Sr.)
	6	Ray Herring (5-10, 190, Jr.)
CB	20	Terrail Lambert (5-11, 191, Jr.)
	15	Leo Ferrine (6-0, 189, Jr.)
P	17	Geoff Price (6-3, 196, Sr.)
PR	9	Tom Zbikowski (6-0, 210, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold *True freshman

ARMY

BLACK KNIGHTS

OFFENSE New coach Stan Brock has pledged to retain the same balanced attack former boss Bobby Ross favored. He first must settle on a quarterback. Carson Williams and David Pevoto combined to throw 24 interceptions last year. Williams had the early edge but must continue to develop. Last year's top three running backs return, but the best of this year could be freshman Patrick Mealy, who starred at Army's prep school last year. He has potential if he isn't overrun by enemies—the line needs big help in the middle.

DEFENSE Army allowed opponents to rush for 4.8 yards per carry last year, a figure that should improve because of Iowa transfer Ted Bentler, a tackle who created havoc on the scout team last year. End Victor Ugenyi could be a star, but there's trouble at linebacker unless Frank Scappaticci and Brian Chmura emerge. Talent abounds in the secondary, beginning with strong safety Caleb Campbell, who injured his knee last season but should be full speed by fall. The team will look to improve on last year's four interceptions.

SPECIAL TEAMS If you can kick a ball straight, contact your congressman for an emergency commission; Army has nobody. Punter Owen Tolson averaged a solid 42.2 yards per kick last year, and speedy Jeremy Trimble returned two punts for TDs in 2006. As usual, the coverage units are stout.

BOTTOM LINE: By retaining nine holdovers from last year's staff, Brock made a commitment to continuity. Fans hope that doesn't include a rerun of last year's three-win performance and leaky defense. But trouble on the lines won't be fixed easily, and the schedule isn't forgiving. Don't expect more than four wins this year.

Quickhits

Stadium: Michie (artificial, 40,000)
Site: West Point, N.Y.
Coach: Stan Brock (1st year, 4th at school)
Offensive coordinator: Tim Walsh (1st year)
Defensive coordinator: John Mumford (4th year, 8th at school)
Last bowl appearance: 1996
2006 record: 3-9

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
9-1	vs. Akron*	
9-8	Rhode Island	
9-15	at Wake Forest	
9-22	at Boston College	
9-29	• Temple	
10-6	Tulane	28-42
10-13	at Central Michigan	
10-20	■ at Georgia Tech	
11-3	at Air Force	7-43
11-9	Rutgers^	
11-17	Tulsa	
12-1	▲ vs. Navy^	14-26

*at Cleveland ^Friday ^at Baltimore

■ Toughest game • Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	36	Damion Hunter (5-10, 166, So.)
LT	75	Ray Zelenak (6-2, 256, Sr.)
LG	79	Brandon Cox (6-3, 297, Jr.)
C	64	Trey Miranne (6-0, 273, Sr.)
RG	74	Connor Wicklund (6-3, 284, Sr.)
RT	76	Mike Lemming (6-3, 281, Jr.)
TE	80	Justin Larson (6-5, 228, Sr.)
WR	5	Jeremy Trimble (6-0, 219, Sr.)
QB	10	Carson Williams (6-3, 210, So.)
RB	23	Wesley McMahand (5-5, 177, Jr.)
FB	33	Mike Viti (5-10, 242, Sr.)
K	1	Owen Tolson (6-2, 201, Sr.)
KR	36	Damion Hunter (5-10, 166, So.)

Defense

E	95	Brandon Thompson (6-3, 261, Sr.)
T	98	John Wright (6-1, 259, Sr.)
T	66	Tony Fusco (6-1, 303, Sr.)
E	88	Victor Ugenyi (6-3, 262, So.)
SLB	45	Charlie Rockwood (6-3, 228, Sr.)
MLB	44	Brian Chmura (6-0, 224, Sr.)
WLB	49	Frank Scappaticci (6-1, 222, Jr.)
CB	36	John Laird (5-10, 185, Sr.)
FS	19	Jordan Murray (6-0, 204, Sr.)
SS	13	Caleb Campbell (6-2, 224, Sr.)
CB	25	Kevin Opoku (5-11, 183, Sr.)
P	1	Owen Tolson (6-2, 201, Sr.)
PR	5	Jeremy Trimble (6-0, 219, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold

NAVY

MIDSHIPMEN

OFFENSE The constant in Paul Johnson's tenure has been the spread option attack. Last year, when quarterback Brian Hampton hurt his knee at midseason, Kaipo-Noa Kaheaku-Enhada stepped in and kept the engine humming. Kaheaku-Enhada returns but will be challenged by strong-armed Jarod Bryant, who gets better and better at reading the option. Whoever doesn't start will join speedy Reggie Campbell at slot back. Fullback Adam Ballard broke his leg last year but returns as the team's top rusher. The line loses three starters but should be fine thanks to center Antron Harper and tackle Josh Meek.

DEFENSE The front seven lost all but one of its 2006 starters. Linemen Nate Frazier and Andy Lark have potential, as does end Casey Hebert, provided he works hard enough. Irv Spencer is a solid interior linebacker, and coaches like Clint Sovie, too. There is plenty of talent in the secondary, in part because of the return of corner Greg Thrasher, who missed last season because of academics. Rashawn King should handle the other corner spot, with Ketric Buffin and Jeff Deliz the top safety candidates.

SPECIAL TEAMS Neither of the kickers, Matt Harmon and Joey Bullen, attempted a field goal beyond 39 yards last year. Together, they were 10-of-14. Punter Greg Veteto (38.1 average, two blocked) must improve. Campbell is a strong return man.

BOTTOM LINE The Mids can continue their string of four bowl games in four years because of an offense that should be outstanding and a defense that should hold its own. The schedule includes tests (at Rutgers, at Pitt, Wake Forest, at Notre Dame), but expect seven or eight wins and another bowl trip.

Quickhits

Stadium: Navy-Marine Corps Memorial (artificial, 34,000)
Site: Annapolis, Md.
Coach: Paul Johnson (37-25, 5 years, 7 at school)
Offensive coordinator: Paul Johnson (6th year)
Defensive coordinator: Buddy Green (6th year)
Last year not in a bowl: 2002
2006 record: 9-4
Meineke Car Care Bowl: Lost to Boston College, 25-24

Schedule

Date	Opponent	'06 score
8-31	at Temple*	42-6
9-7	▲ at Rutgers*	0-34
9-15	Ball State	
9-22	Duke	38-13
9-29	Air Force	24-17
10-10	at Pitt^	
10-20	Wake Forest	
10-27	Delaware	
11-3	■ at Notre Dame	14-38
11-10	at North Texas	
11-17	Northern Illinois	
12-1	• vs. Army^	26-14

*Friday ^Wednesday ^at Baltimore

■ Toughest game • Must win
 ▲ Best chance to pull an upset

Projected starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name
WR	80	O.J. Washington (5-10, 188, Sr.)
LT	53	Josh Meek (6-1, 274, Sr.)
LG	72	Anthony Gaskins (6-1, 281, Jr.)
C	63	Antron Harper (5-11, 272, Sr.)
RG	74	Ben Gabbard (6-4, 297, Sr.)
RT	75	Andrew McGinn (6-1, 255, Jr.)
WR	89	Tyree Barnes (6-2, 188, Jr.)
SB	28	Zerbin Singleton (5-8, 164, Sr.)
QB	10	K.-N. Kaheaku-Enhada (5-11, 194, Jr.)
SB	7	Reggie Campbell (5-6, 168, Sr.)
FB	22	Adam Ballard (6-1, 236, Sr.)
K	19	Matt Harmon (5-10, 182, Jr.)
KR	7	Reggie Campbell (5-6, 168, Sr.)

Defense

LE	92	Chris Kuhar-Pitters (6-2, 258, Sr.)
NG	99	Nate Frazier (6-3, 285, So.)
RE	38	Michael Walsh (6-2, 239, Jr.)
OLB	9	Matt Humiston (5-11, 207, Sr.)
ILB	44	Clint Sovie (5-11, 201, Jr.)
ILB	55	Irv Spencer (6-0, 238, Sr.)
OLB	54	Matt Wimsatt (6-1, 216, Sr.)
LCB	18	Rashawn King (6-0, 190, Jr.)
FS	17	Jeff Deliz (5-11, 195, Sr.)
SS	1	Blake Carter (5-11, 188, So.)
RCB	20	Greg Thrasher (5-8, 181, Sr.)
P	31	Greg Veteto (6-1, 178, Sr.)
PR	7	Reggie Campbell (5-6, 168, Sr.)

Returning starters in bold

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The top five prospects for 2008

1. Terrelle Pryor, QB, 6-6, 220, 4.6 (40 speed) Jeannette, Pa./Jeannette

Pryor is an exceptional athlete and the kind of quarterback who can hurt a defense with his feet or his arm. Pryor is a sure-fire prospect who led his team to the state playoff final last year.

2. Julio Jones, WR, 6-4, 215, 4.48 Foley, Ala./Foley

Jones not only is a tremendous athlete—he has one of the best vertical leaps in the nation at 41 inches—but he also is a polished player with tremendous instincts.

3. DeAngelo Tyson, DT, 6-2, 276, 5.1 Statesboro, Ga./Statesboro

Tyson already has committed to Georgia. He has tremendous upside—he's only 16



CAROLYN KASTER / AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

years old. When he is done growing, he could be the type of defensive tackle that gives SEC quarterbacks fits.

4. Jermie Calhoun, RB, 6-0, 210, 4.49 Van, Texas/Van

Calhoun has made an early commitment to Oklahoma. He has the potential to be the next great East Texas running back—Earl Campbell, Adrian Peterson and Billy Sims also played in the region.

5. Michael Brewster, OL, 6-6, 305, 5.1 Orlando/Edgewater

Brewster stands out because he dominates the line of scrimmage on almost every play. The only question with Brewster is whether he's a left or right tackle. He has committed to Ohio State.

The next 20

6. Darrell Scott, RB, 6-0, 215, 4.4 Ventura, Calif./St. Bonaventure

Scott is strong enough to do damage running inside and fast enough to bounce a play to the outside.

7. Blaine Gabbert, QB, 6-5, 229, 4.65 Ballwin, Mo./Parkway West

This big quarterback can hurt opposing teams with his arm and his legs.

8. Arthur Brown, OLB, 6-1, 225, 4.5 Wichita, Kan./East

Brown had 132 tackles and 12 sacks as a junior and earned all-state honors.

9. A.J. Green, WR, 6-4, 184, 4.5 Summerville, S.C./Summerville

Many have considered Green, who has committed to Georgia, the top receiver in South Carolina since his freshman year.

10. Will Hill, ATH, 6-3, 200, 4.4 Jersey City, N.J./St. Peter's Prep

The explosive athlete could play safety, corner or be an all-purpose player.

11. D.J. Shoemate, ATH, 6-0, 219, 4.5 Anaheim/Servite

Shoemate, who has committed to USC, dominated as a sophomore but missed his junior season because of a foot injury.

12. Chancey Aghayere, DE, 6-4, 241, 4.7 Garland, Texas/Garland

As a junior, Aghayere put his name on the national map with 54 tackles and five sacks.

13. Jonathan Baldwin, TE, 6-6, 225, 4.4 Aliquippa, Pa./Aliquippa

Few players have the size/speed combination that Baldwin possesses.

14. Nigel Bradham, LB, 6-2, 220, 4.5 Crawfordville, Fla./Wakulla

Bradham made a name for himself as a sophomore when he had 139 tackles. He has committed to Florida State.

15. Baker Steinkuhler, OL, 6-6, 290, 4.98 Lincoln, Neb./Lincoln Southwest

Steinkuhler is a devastating run blocker, and his skills as a pass blocker are advanced. He has committed to Nebraska.

16. Templeton Hardy, DT, 6-4, 285, 5.2 Sardis, Miss./North Panola

As a junior, Hardy was an all-district selection as an offensive lineman, but he's projected to play defense in college.

17. Kyle Long, OL, 6-7, 280, 5.0 Charlottesville, Va./St. Anne's-Belfield

Long, the son of NFL legend Howie Long, is a nasty blocker that has good leverage.

18. Stephen Good, OL, 6-5, 290, 5.06 Paris, Texas/Paris

Good's footwork is stellar, which makes him great on pulling plays. He has committed to Oklahoma.

19. Shayne Hale, LB, 6-4, 225, 4.5 Monroeville, Pa./Gateway

As a junior, Hale made 105 tackles, 13 tackles for loss and five sacks.

20. Marcus Forston, DT, 6-2, 286, 5.0 Miami/Miami Northwestern

Forston showed his strength last April by bench pressing 185 pounds 33 times.

21. Dan Buckner, WR, 6-4, 211, 4.5 Allen, Texas/Allen

Buckner, who has committed to Texas, is a tall game-breaker.

22. Tyler Love, OL, 6-7, 285, 5.0 Mountain Brook, Ala./Mountain Brook

Love is an athletic lineman who moves really well for a big guy. He's an excellent student and is smart on the field.

23. Richard Samuel, RB, 6-0, 197, 4.47 Cartersville, Ga./Cass

Samuel is a special running back and an excellent linebacker. He has committed to Georgia.

24. Michael Floyd, WR, 6-3, 195, 4.55 St. Paul, Minn./Cretin-Derham Hall

Floyd can create matchup problems with smaller defenders. He has great leaping ability to win jump balls.

25. T.J. Bryant, DB, 6-1, 175, 4.4 Tallahassee, Fla./Lincoln

The super-speedy Bryant is only 16, so he likely will be bigger when he reaches college. He is a standout on the track team but has cover skills beyond speed.

Rivals.com's top 25 high school football prospects for 2008 as of May 2007.

The top 200 prospects for 2008

Quarterbacks

1. Terrelle Pryor, 6-6/220, Jeanette, Pa./Jeanette
 2. Blaine Gabbert, 6-5/229, Ballwin, Mo./Parkway West
 3. Landry Jones, 6-4/205, Artesia, N.M./Artesia
 4. E.J. Manuel, 6-6/205, Virginia Beach, Va./Bayside
 5. Dayne Crist, 6-5/221, Sherman Oaks, Calif./Notre Dame
- Nick Crissman, 6-3/189, Huntington Beach, Calif./Edison
Andrew Luck, 6-4/195, Houston/Stratford

Running backs

1. Jermie Calhoun, 6-0/210, Van, Texas/Van
 2. Darrell Scott, 6-0/215, Ventura, Calif./St. Bonaventure
 3. Richard Samuel, 6-0/197, Cartersville, Ga./Cass
 4. Ryan Williams, 5-10/192, Manassas, Va./Stonewall Jackson
 5. Sam McGuffie, 6-0/185, Cypress, Texas/Cy-Fair
- Ryan Bass, 5-9/191, Corona, Calif./Centennial
Demetrius Bronson, 5-10/200, Kentwood, Wash./Kent
Averin Collier, 5-11/195, Churchville, N.Y./Churchville-Chili
De'Anthony Curtis, 5-11/210, Camden, Ark./Fairview
Ken Davis, 6-0/215, Tupelo, Miss./Tupelo
Marcus Dowtin, 6-2/195, Fork Union, Va./Fork Union Military
Andre Ellington, 6-0/180, Moncks Corner, S.C./Berkeley
Cyrus Gray, 6-0/188, DeSoto, Texas/DeSoto
Jonas Gray, 5-9/206, Detroit/Country Day
Josh Haden, 5-7/170, Fort Washington, Md./Friendly
Jamie Harper, 6-0/205, Jacksonville/Trinity Christian
Dontavious Jackson, 5-11/195, Franklin, Ga./Heard County
Milton Knox, 5-7/190, Van Nuys, Calif./Birmingham
Eric Smith, 5-10/239, Seffner, Fla./Armwood
Lamaar Thomas, 5-10/170, Fort Washington, Md./Friendly
Kevin Whaley, 5-11/170, Virginia Beach, Va./Salem

Wide receivers/tight ends

1. Julio Jones, 6-4/215, Foley, Ala./Foley
 2. A.J. Green, 6-4/184, Summerville, S.C./Summerville
 3. Jonathan Baldwin, 6-6/225, Aliquippa, Pa./Aliquippa
 4. Dan Buckner, 6-4/211, Allen, Texas/Allen
 5. Michael Floyd, 6-3/195, St. Paul, Minn./Cretin-Derham Hall
- Dwayne Allen, 6-4/230, Fayetteville, N.C./Sanford
Blake Ayles, 6-4/235, Orange, Calif./Lutheran
Matt Branch, 6-7/240, Sterlington, La./Sterlington
DeAndre Brown, 6-6/202, Ocean Springs, Miss./Ocean Springs
Brice Butler, 6-2/175, Norcross, Ga./Norcross
Chase Clement, 6-5/245, Thibodeaux, La./E.D. White
D.J. Coles, 6-4/198, Goochland, Va./Goochland
Aaron Douglas, 6-7/240, Maryville, Tenn./Maryville
Tyler Edwards, 6-3/225, Monroe, La./Ouachita
Joseph Fauria, 6-7/250, Encino, Calif./Crespi
Hubie Graham, 6-4/227, Scranton, Pa./West Scranton
Brandon Green, 6-1/175, Chicago/Robeson
DeSean Hales, 5-10/165, Spring, Texas/Klein Oak
Omarius Hines, 6-1/180, Corsicana, Texas/Corsicana
Joshua Jarboe, 6-3/185, Ellenwood, Ga./Cedar Grove
Aldarius Johnson, 6-2/200, Miami/Northwestern
Andrew Jones, 6-6/237, Smithville, Mo./Smithville
Wes Kemp, 6-4/226, St. Louis/DeSmet Jesuit
Tavarres King, 6-1/175, Mount Airy, Ga./Habersham Central
T.J. Lawrence, 6-1/175, Lakeland, Fla./Kathleen
Kavario Middleton, 6-6/250, Lakewood, Wash./Lakes
DeJuan Miller, 6-6/207, Metuchen, N.J./Metuchen
Brandon Moore, 6-6/243, Trotwood, Ohio/Madison
Jameel Owens, 6-3/210, Muskogee, Okla./Muskogee
DeVier Posey, 6-3/195, Cincinnati/La Salle
Melvin Ray, 6-3/190, Tallahassee, Fla./North Florida Christian
Nelson Rosario, 6-5/205, Oceanside, Calif./El Camino
Kyle Rudolph, 6-7/220, Cincinnati/Elder
Supo Sanni, 6-4/195, Homewood, Ill./Homewood-Flossmoor
Cordale Scott, 6-3/200, Cleveland/Glenville
Fred Smith, 6-2/215, Detroit/Southeastern
Jake Stoneburner, 6-6/233, Dublin, Ohio/Coffman
Darryl Stonum, 6-2/180, Sugar Land, Texas/Dulles
Tommy Streeter, 6-6/205, Miami/Northwestern

Kenny Tate, 6-4/215, Hyattsville, Md./DeMatha
Brandon Taylor, 5-11/185, Franklinton, La./Franklinton
Chris Tolliver, 6-1/181, Rayville, La./Rayville
Deion Walker, 6-4/180, Christchurch, Va./Christchurch
Michael Williams, 6-4/255, Reform, Ala./Pickens County

Offensive linemen

1. Michael Brewster, 6-6/305, Orlando/Edgewater
 2. Baker Steinkuhler, 6-6/290, Lincoln, Neb./Southwest
 3. Kyle Long, 6-7/280, Charlottesville, Va./St. Anne's-Belfield
 4. Stephen Good, 6-5/290, Paris, Texas/Paris
 5. Tyler Love, 6-7/285, Mountain Brook, Ala./Mountain Brook
- Mike Adams, 6-7/290, Dublin, Ohio/Coffman
James Bennett, 6-9/280, Alexandria, Va./West Potomac
Mark Buchanan, 6-5/265, Austin, Texas/Austin
Daniel Campbell, 6-6/320, Houston/Aldine
Braxton Cave, 6-4/295, Mishawaka, Ind./Penn
Lane Clelland, 6-5/295, Owings Mills, Md./McDonogh School
Ryan Dannewitz, 6-6/257, San Jacinto, Calif./San Jacinto
Vaughn Dotsy, 6-5/346, Ventura, Calif./St. Bonaventure
Art Forst, 6-8/280, Manassas, N.J./Manassas
Bryce Givens, 6-6/295, Denver/Mullen
Matt Hall, 6-10/290, Dardanelle, Ark./Dardanelle
A.J. Harmon, 6-4/280, Louisville, Ga./Jefferson County
Dan Hoch, 6-6/295, Harlan, Iowa/Harlan
Khaled Holmes, 6-4/301, Santa Ana, Calif./Mater Dei
Matt Kalil, 6-7/277, Anaheim, Calif./Servite
Peter Konz, 6-6/285, Neenah, Wisc./Neenah
P.J. Loneragan, 6-4/288, Metairie, La./Archbishop Rummel
R.J. Mattes, 6-7/265, Concord, N.C./Robinson
Antoine McClain, 6-6/315, Anniston, Ala./Anniston
Lucas Nix, 6-6/295, Jefferson Hills, Pa./Jefferson
Dan O'Neill, 6-8/291, Grand Haven, Mich./Grand Haven
Kenneth Page, 6-4/280, Columbia, S.C./A.C. Flora
Vinston Painter, 6-6/317, Norfolk, Va./Maury
Matt Patchan, 6-7/260, Seffner, Fla./Armwood
Graham Pocic, 6-7/301, Lemont, Ill./Lemont
Trevor Robinson, 6-5/300, Elkhorn, Neb./Elkhorn
Zebbie Sanders, 6-5/273, Clayton, Ohio/Northmont
Zach Schlank, 6-4/288, Peoria, Ariz./Centennial
Gregory Shaw, 6-6/285, Miami/Monsignor Pace
J.B. Shugarts, 6-7/299, Klein, Texas/Klein
Tyron Smith, 6-4/255, Moreno Valley, Calif./Rancho Verde
David Snow, 6-4/300, Gilmer, Texas/Gilmer
Max Tuioti-Mariner, 6-2/279, Corona, Calif./Corona
Brandon Washington, 6-3/300, Miami/Northwestern

Defensive linemen

1. DeAngelo Tyson, 6-2/276, Statesboro, Ga./Statesboro
 2. Chancey Aghayere, 6-4/241, Garland, Texas/Garland
 3. Templeton Hardy, 6-4/285, Sardis, Miss./North Panola
 4. Marcus Forston, 6-2/286, Miami/Northwestern
 5. Wes Horton, 6-6/230, Sherman Oaks, Calif./Notre Dame
- DaQuan Bowers, 6-4/260, Bamberg, S.C./Bamberg-Ehrhardt
Sean Cwynar, 6-4/284, Woodstock, Ill./Marion Central Catholic
Teddy Dargan, 6-3/286, Baltimore/Milford Mill
Darius Fleming, 6-3/230, Chicago/St. Rita
Tony Gillespie, 6-1/298, Jenks, Okla./Jenks
William Green, 6-4/215, Hoover, Ala./Spain Park
Lawrence Guy, 6-5/256, Las Vegas/Western
Jarvis Humphrey, 6-2/290, Cedar Hill, Texas/Cedar Hill
Toby Jackson, 6-4/244, Griffin, Ga./Griffin
Tony Jerod, 6-3/240, DeSoto, Texas/DeSoto
Ethan Johnson, 6-4/266, Portland/Lincoln
Datone Jones, 6-4/235, Compton, Calif./Compton
Masengo Kabongo, 6-2/275, Fairfield, Conn./Fairfield
Solomon Koehler, 6-2/315, Kaneohe, Hawaii/Castle
Brandon Lewis, 6-3/260, Pleasant Grove, Ala./Pleasant Grove
Kapron Lewis-Moore, 6-4/225, Weatherford, Texas/Weatherford
Stacey McGee, 6-5/280, Muskogee, Okla./Muskogee
Nick Perry, 6-4/220, Detroit/McKenzie
Robert Quinn, 6-4/245, North Charleston, S.C./Fort Dorchester

Klinton Ruff, 6-4/298, Norfolk, Va./Norview
Everette Thompson, 6-5/230, Burien, Wash./Kennedy
Al Joshua Tillman, 6-4/245, Meadville, Miss./Franklin County
Bo Tillman, 6-6/285, Meadville, Miss./Franklin County
Cornelius Washington, 6-4/225, Waynesboro, Ga./Burke County
R.J. Washington, 6-3/248, Keller, Texas/Fossil Ridge

Linebackers

1. Arthur Brown, 6-1/225, Wichita, Kan./East
 2. Nigel Bradham, 6-2/220, Crawfordville, Fla./Wakulla
 3. Shayne Hale, 6-4/225, Monroeville, Pa./Gateway
 4. Devoe Torrence, 6-2/210, Massillon, Ohio/Washington
 5. Marcus Robinson, 6-2/215, Homestead, Fla./Homestead
- Brandon Beachum, 6-1/220, Youngstown, Ohio/Cardinal Mooney
Brendan Beal, 6-4/235, Succasunna, N.J./Roxbury
Ramon Buchanan, 6-0/200, Melbourne, Fla./Palm Bay
Nigel Carr, 6-3/230, Jacksonville/First Coast
Steven Filer, 6-3/220, Chicago/Mount Carmel
J.B. Fitzgerald, 6-3/220, Princeton Junction, N.J./West Windsor-
Plainsboro South
Jordan Futch, 6-3/206, Hollywood, Fla./Chaminade-Madonna
Dravanni Johnson, 6-2/220, Nederland, Texas/Nederland
Lynn Katoa, 6-2/220, Salt Lake City, Utah/Cottonwood
Uona Kaveinga, 6-0/215, Lawndale, Calif./Leuzinger
Dwayne Maddox, 6-0/220, Shelby, N.C./Crest
Jon Major, 6-4/230, Parker, Colo./Ponderosa
Terrell Manning, 6-2/210, Laurinburg, N.C./Scotland
Sam Mares, 6-2/240, Champlin, Minn./Champlin Park
Anthony McDonald, 6-4/215, Sherman Oaks, Calif./Notre Dame
Etienne Sabino, 6-3/238, Miami/Krop
Maurice Simmons, 6-0/200, Compton, Calif./Dominguez
Sean Spence, 6-0/200, Miami/Northwestern
Andrew Sweat, 6-2/225, Washington, Pa./Trinity
Bruce Taylor, 6-3/230, Myrtle Beach, S.C./Myrtle Beach
Marlon Walls, 6-2/215, Memphis/Wooddale
Christian Wilson, 6-4/211, McKees Rocks, Pa./Montour
Marcus Witherspoon, 6-2/215, Absecon, N.J./Holy Spirit

Defensive backs

1. T.J. Bryant, 6-1/175, Tallahassee, Fla./Lincoln
 2. Patrick Johnson, 6-0/180, Pompano Beach, Fla./Blanche Ely
 3. Boubacar Cissoko, 5-9/180, Detroit/Cass Tech
 4. Aaron Williams, 6-1/175, Round Rock, Texas/McNeil
 5. Xavier Brewer, 5-11/181, Jacksonville/Bartram Trail
- Spencer Adams, 6-0/180, Matthews, N.C./Butler
Robert Blanton, 6-0/175, Matthews, N.C./Butler
Nolan Brewster, 6-1/195, Denver/Mullen
Dee Finley, 6-3/210, Auburn, Ala./Auburn
Robert Golden, 5-10/182, Fresno, Calif./Edison
Jarred Holley, 5-11/175, Easton, Pa./Easton Area
Janoris Jenkins, 6-0/180, Pahokee, Fla./Pahokee
Dan McCarthy, 6-2/190, Youngstown, Ohio/Cardinal Mooney
Charles Mitchell, 5-11/175, Clarksdale, Miss./Clarksdale
D.J. Monroe, 5-9/165, Angleton, Texas/Angleton
Nick Moody, 6-2/210, Philadelphia/Roman Catholic
Terrance Parks, 6-1/190, Fairburn, Ga./Creekside
Jamoris Slaughter, 6-0/180, Tucker, Ga./Tucker
C.C. Whitlock, 6-0/180, Chester, S.C./Chester
E.J. Woods, 6-1/195, Encino, Calif./Crespi

Athletes

1. Will Hill, 6-3/200, Jersey City, N.J./St. Peter's Prep
 2. D.J. Shoemate, 6-0/219, Anaheim/Servite
 3. Gerrell Robinson, 6-4/210, Chandler, Ariz./Hamilton
 4. Mark Barron, 6-2/205, Mobile, Ala./St. Paul's
 5. Brandon Barnes, 6-1/180, Bunn, N.C./Bunn
- A.J. Alexander, 5-10/163, Altoona, Pa./Altoona Area
Justin Johnson, 6-1/210, Gilmer, Texas/Gilmer
Chris Jordan, 6-2/205, Brentwood, Tenn./Brentwood Academy
Burton Scott, 5-11/175, Prichard, Ala./Vigor
Brandon Smith, 6-3/210, New Brunswick, N.J./New Brunswick
Kellen Theriot, 6-2/225, Bellaire, Texas/Episcopal

Team	Sept. 1	Sept. 8	Sept. 15	Sept. 22	Sept. 29	Oct. 6	Oct. 13	Oct. 20	Oct. 27	Nov. 3	Nov. 10	Nov. 17	Nov. 24
AIR FORCE	South Carolina State	at Utah	TCU (Thurs., Sept. 13) at Indiana	at BYU	at Navy	UNLV	at Colorado State	Wyoming	at New Mexico (Thurs., Oct. 25) at Buffalo	Army	at Notre Dame	San Diego State	
AKRON	vs. Army (Browns Stadium, Cleveland)	at Ohio State		Kent State	at Connecticut	at Western Michigan	Temple			at Bowling Green (Fri., Nov. 2)	Ohio (Wed., Nov. 7)	at Miami (Ohio) (Wed., Nov. 14)	Central Michigan (Fri., Nov. 23)
ALABAMA	Western Carolina	at Vanderbilt	Arkansas	Georgia	vs. Florida State (Jackswille Municipal Stadium, Jacksonville)	Houston	at Mississippi	Tennessee		LSU	at Mississippi State	La-Monroe	at Auburn
ARIZONA	at BYU	Northern Arizona	New Mexico	at California	Washington State	at Oregon State	at USC	Stanford	at Washington	UCLA		Oregon (Thurs., Nov. 15)	at Arizona State (Sat., Dec. 1)
ARIZONA STATE	San Jose State	Colorado	San Diego State	Oregon State	at Stanford	at Washington State	Washington		California	at Oregon	at UCLA		USC (Thurs., Nov. 22) Arizona (Sat., Dec. 1)
ARKANSAS	Troy	at Alabama	at Alabama	Kentucky	North Texas	UT-Chattanooga (Nolan Memorial Stadium, Little Rock, Ark.) at La-Monroe	Auburn	at Mississippi	Fla. International	South Carolina	at Tennessee	Mississippi State (War Memorial Stadium, Little Rock, Ark.) North Texas (Thurs., Nov. 15)	at LSU (Fri., Nov. 23)
ARKANSAS STATE	at Texas	Memphis	SMU	at Tennessee	at Tennessee	Tulane	La-Lafayette	at Middle Tennessee	Troy	Fla. International	at Fla. Atlantic		at Southern Miss
ARMY	vs. Akron (Browns Stadium, Cleveland)	Rhode Island	at Wake Forest	at Boston College	Temple		at Central Michigan	at Georgia Tech		at Air Force	Rutgers (Fri., Nov. 9)		vs. Navy (Sat., Dec. 1, M&T Bank Stadium, Baltimore)
AUBURN	Kansas State	South Florida	Mississippi State	New Mexico State	at Florida	Vanderbilt	at Arkansas	at LSU	Mississippi	Tennessee Tech	at Georgia		Alabama
BALL STATE	Miami (Ohio)	at Eastern Michigan	at Navy	at Nebraska	Buffalo	Central Michigan	Western Kentucky	at Western Michigan	at Illinois	at Indiana	at Toledo		at Northern Illinois
BAYLOR	at TCU	Rice	Texas State	at Buffalo	at Texas A&M	Colorado	at Kansas	Texas	at Kansas State	Texas Tech	at Oklahoma	Oklahoma State	
BOISE STATE	Weber State	at Washington	Wyoming		Southern Miss (Thurs., Sept. 27)	New Mexico State (Sun., Oct. 7)	Nevada (Sun., Oct. 14)	at Louisiana Tech	at Fresno State (Fri., Oct. 28)	San Jose State	at Utah State	Idaho	at Hawaii (Fri., Nov. 23)
BOSTON COLLEGE	Wake Forest	N.C. State	at Georgia Tech	Army	Massachusetts	Bowling Green	at Notre Dame	at Kent State	at Virginia Tech (Thurs., Oct. 25)	Florida State	at Maryland	at Clemson	Miami
BOWLING GREEN	at Minnesota	at Michigan State		Temple	Western Kentucky	at Boston College	at Miami (Ohio)	at Kent State	Ohio	Alcorn (Fri., Nov. 2)	at Eastern Michigan (Fri., Nov. 9)	at Buffalo	Toledo (Fri., Nov. 23)
BUFFALO	at Rutgers	at Temple	at Penn State	Baylor	at Ball State	Ohio	Toledo	at Syracuse	Alcorn	at Miami (Ohio)	Bowling Green		at Kent State
BYU	at Arizona	at UCLA	at Tulsa	Air Force	at New Mexico		at UNLV	Eastern Washington	at San Diego State	Colorado State	TCU (Thurs., Nov. 8)	at Wyoming	Utah
CALIFORNIA	Tennessee	at Colorado State	Louisiana Tech	Arizona	at Oregon		Oregon State	at UCLA	at Arizona State	Washington State	at Washington		at Stanford (Sat., Dec. 1)
CENTRAL MICHIGAN	at Kansas	Toledo	at Purdue	North Dakota State	Northern Illinois	at Ball State	Army	at Clemson	at Kent State	at Western Michigan (Thurs., Nov. 6)	Eastern Michigan (Fri., Nov. 16)		at Akron (Fri., Nov. 23)
CINCINNATI	SE Missouri State (Thurs., Aug. 30)	Oregon State (Thurs., Sept. 6)	at Miami (Ohio)	Marshall	at San Diego State	at Rutgers	Louisville	at Pitt		at South Florida	Connecticut	Boston College	at Syracuse
CLEMSON	Florida State	La-Monroe	Furman	at N.C. State	at Georgia Tech	Virginia Tech	at Kansas State	Central Michigan	at Maryland	at Duke	Wake Forest		at South Carolina
COLORADO	vs. Colorado State (Mon., Sept. 3)	at Arizona State	Florida State	Miami (Ohio)	Oklahoma	at Baylor	at Kansas State	Kansas	at Texas Tech	Missouri	at Iowa State		Nebraska (Fri., Nov. 23)
COLORADO STATE	Imeson Field, Denver	California		at Houston	at TCU	San Diego State	Air Force	at UNLV	Utah	at BYU	at New Mexico	Georgia Southern	Wyoming (Fri., Nov. 23)
CONNECTICUT	at Duke	Maine	Temple	at Pitt	Alcorn		at Virginia	Louisville (Fri., Oct. 19)	South Florida	Rutgers	at Cincinnati	Syracuse	at West Virginia
DUKE	Connecticut	at Virginia	at Northwestern	at Navy	at Miami	Wake Forest	Virginia Tech		at Florida State	Clemson	Georgia Tech	at Notre Dame	at North Carolina
EAST CAROLINA	at Virginia Tech	North Carolina	Southern Miss	at West Virginia	at Houston	UCF	at UTEP	N.C. State	UAB	at Memphis	at Marshall		Tulane
EASTERN MICHIGAN	at Pitt	Ball State	at Northern Illinois	Howard	at Vanderbilt	at Michigan	at Ohio	vs. Northwestern (Fri., Oct. 19)	Western Michigan	at Toledo	Bowling Green (Fri., Nov. 9)	at Central Michigan (Fri., Nov. 16)	
FLORIDA	Western Kentucky	Troy	Tennessee	at Mississippi	Auburn	at LSU		at Kentucky	vs. Georgia (Jacksonville Municipal Stadium, Jacksonville)	Vanderbilt	at South Carolina	Fla. Atlantic	Florida State
FLA. ATLANTIC	Middle Tennessee	at Oklahoma State	vs. Minnesota (Dolphin Stadium, Miami)	at North Texas	at Kentucky	South Florida		at La-Lafayette	La-Monroe	Arkansas State	at Florida		at Fla. International (Sat., Dec. 1)
FLA. INTERNATIONAL	at Penn State	Maryland	at Miami	at Kansas	at Middle Tennessee	Troy		at La-Monroe	at Arkansas	at Arkansas State		La-Lafayette	Fla. Atlantic (Sat., Dec. 1)

Team	Sept. 1	Sept. 8	Sept. 15	Sept. 22	Sept. 29	Oct. 6	Oct. 13	Oct. 20	Oct. 27	Nov. 3	Nov. 10	Nov. 17	Nov. 24
FLORIDA STATE	at Clemson (Mon., Sept. 3)	UAB	at Colorado		vs. Alabama (Jacksonville Municipal Stadium, Jacksonville)	N.C. State	at Wake Forest (Thurs., Oct. 11)	Miami	Duke	at Boston College	at Virginia Tech	Maryland	at Florida
FRESNO STATE	Sacramento State	at Texas A&M	at Oregon			at Nevada	at Idaho	San Jose State	Boise State (Fri., Oct. 26)	Utah State	at Hawaii		Kansas State at New Mexico State (Fri., Nov. 30) at Georgia Tech
GEORGIA	Oklahoma State	South Carolina	Western Carolina	at Alabama	Mississippi	at Tennessee	at Vanderbilt		vs. Florida (Jacksonville Municipal Stadium, Jacksonville)	Troy	Auburn	Kentucky	
GEORGIA TECH	at Notre Dame	Samford	Boston College	at Virginia	Clemson	at Maryland	at Miami	Amy		Virginia Tech (Thurs., Nov. 1)	at Duke	North Carolina	Georgia
HAWAII*		at Louisiana Tech	at UNLV	Charleston Southern	at Idaho	Utah State	at San Jose State (Fri., Oct. 12)		New Mexico State		Fresno State	at Nevada (Fri., Nov. 16)	Boise State (Fri., Nov. 23) Washington (Sat., Dec. 1)
HOUSTON	at Oregon		at Tulane	Colorado State	East Carolina	at Alabama	Rice	at UAB	at UTEP	SMU (Sun., Nov. 4)	at Tulsa	Marshall	Texas Southern
IDAHO	at USC	Cal Poly	at Washington State	Northern Illinois	Hawaii	at San Jose State	Fresno State	at New Mexico State	at Nevada	Louisiana Tech	at Ohio State	at Boise State	Utah State
ILLINOIS	vs. Missouri (Edward Jones Dome, St. Louis)	Western Illinois	at Syracuse	at Indiana	Penn State	Wisconsin	at Iowa	Michigan	Ball State	at Minnesota		Northwestern	
INDIANA	Indiana State	at Western Michigan	Akron	Illinois	at Iowa	Minnesota	at Michigan State	Penn State	at Wisconsin	Ball State	at Northwestern	Purdue	
IOWA	vs. Northern Illinois (Soldier Field, Chicago)	Syracuse	at Iowa State	at Wisconsin	Indiana	at Penn State	Illinois	at Purdue	Michigan State		at Minnesota	Purdue	
IOWA STATE	Kent State	Northern Iowa	Iowa	at Toledo	at Nebraska	at Texas Tech	Texas	Oklahoma	at Missouri	Kansas State	Colorado	at Kansas	
KANSAS	Central Michigan	SE Louisiana	Toledo	Fla. International		at Kansas State	Baylor	at Colorado	at Texas A&M	Nebraska	at Oklahoma State	Iowa State	vs. Missouri (Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, Mo.) at Fresno State Buffalo
KANSAS STATE	at Auburn	San Jose State	Missouri State	at Akron	at Texas	Kansas	Colorado	at Oklahoma State	Baylor	at Iowa State	at Nebraska	Missouri	
KENT STATE	at Iowa State (Thurs., Aug. 30)	at Kentucky	Delaware State		at Ohio	Miami (Ohio)	at Ohio State	Bowling Green	Central Michigan		at Northern Illinois	at Temple	
KENTUCKY	Eastern Kentucky	Kent State	Louisville	at Arkansas	Fla. Atlantic	at South Carolina (Thurs., Oct. 4)	LSU	Florida	Mississippi State		at Vanderbilt	at Georgia	Tennessee
LA-LAFAYETTE	at South Carolina	Ohio	McNeese State	Troy	at UCF	North Texas	at Arkansas State	Fla. Atlantic	at Fla. Atlantic	at Tennessee	at Middle Tennessee	at Fla. International	La-Monroe
LA-MONROE	Tulsa	at Clemson	at Texas A&M		at Troy	Arkansas State	at North Texas	Fla. International		Middle Tennessee	Grambling State	at Alabama	at La-Lafayette
LOUISIANA TECH	Central Arkansas	Hawaii	at California		at Fresno State	at Mississippi	New Mexico State	Boise State	at Utah State	at Idaho	at LSU	San Jose State	at Nevada (Sat., Dec. 1)
LOUISVILLE	Murray State (Thurs., Aug. 30)	Middle Tennessee (Thurs., Sept. 6)	at Kentucky	Syracuse	at N.C. State	Utah (Fri., Oct. 5)	at Cincinnati	at Connecticut (Fri., Oct. 19)	Pitt	at West Virginia (Thurs., Nov. 8)	at South Florida	at South Florida	Rutgers (Thurs., Nov. 29)
LSU	at Mississippi State (Thurs., Aug. 30)	Virginia Tech	Middle Tennessee	South Carolina	at Tulane	Florida	at Kentucky	Auburn		Alabama	Louisiana Tech	at Mississippi	Arkansas (Fri., Nov. 23) UAB
MARSHALL	at Miami	West Virginia	New Hampshire	at Cincinnati	at Memphis (Thurs., Oct. 2)		at Tulsa	Southern Miss (Sun., Oct. 21)	Rice	at UCF	East Carolina	at Houston	
MARYLAND	Villanova	at Fla. International	West Virginia (Thurs., Sept. 13)	at Wake Forest	at Rutgers	Georgia Tech	Middle Tennessee	at Rice	Clemson	at North Carolina	Boston College	at Florida State	at N.C. State
MEMPHIS	Mississippi	at Arkansas State	Jacksonville State	at UCF	Marshall (Thurs., Oct. 2)	at North Carolina		at Florida State	at Tulane	East Carolina	Southern Miss	UAB	SMU
MIAMI	Marshall	at Oklahoma	Fla. International	Texas A&M (Thurs., Sept. 20)	Duke		Georgia Tech	at Florida State		N.C. State	Virginia	at Virginia Tech	at Boston College
MIAMI (OHIO)	at Ball State (Thurs., Aug. 30)	at Minnesota	Cincinnati	Syracuse		at Kent State	Bowling Green	at Temple	at Vanderbilt	Buffalo		Akron (Wed., Nov. 14)	at Ohio
MICHIGAN	Appalachian State	Oregon	Notre Dame	Penn State	at Northwestern	Eastern Michigan	Purdue	at Illinois	Minnesota	at Michigan State	at Wisconsin	Ohio State	
MICHIGAN STATE	UAB	Bowling Green	Pitt	at Notre Dame	at Wisconsin	Northwestern	Indiana	at Ohio State	at Iowa	Michigan	at Purdue	Penn State	
MIDDLE TENNESSEE	at Fla. Atlantic	at Louisville	at LSU	Western Kentucky	Fla. International	Virginia	at Memphis	Arkansas State	at North Texas	at La-Monroe	La-Lafayette	at Troy	
MINNESOTA	Bowling Green	(Thurs., Sept. 6)	vs. Fla. Atlantic (Dolphin Stadium, Miami)	Purdue	Ohio State	at Indiana	at Northwestern	North Dakota State	at Michigan	Illinois	at Iowa	Wisconsin	
MISSISSIPPI	at Memphis	Missouri	at Vanderbilt	Florida	at Georgia	Louisiana Tech	Alabama	Arkansas	at Auburn	Northwestern State		LSU	at Mississippi State (Fri., Nov. 23)

Team	Sept. 1	Sept. 8	Sept. 15	Sept. 22	Sept. 29	Oct. 6	Oct. 13	Oct. 20	Oct. 27	Nov. 3	Nov. 10	Nov. 17	Nov. 24
MISSISSIPPI STATE	LSU (Thurs., Aug. 30)	at Tulane	at Auburn	Gardner-Webb	at South Carolina	UAB	Tennessee	at West Virginia	at Kentucky		Alabama	at Arkansas (War Memorial Stadium, Little Rock, Ark.) at Kansas State	Mississippi (Fri., Nov. 23)
MISSOURI	vs. Illinois (Edward Jones Dome, St. Louis) at Temple (Fri., Aug. 31)	at Mississippi (Fri., Sept. 7)	Western Michigan	Illinois State		Nebraska	at Oklahoma	Texas Tech	Iowa State	at Colorado	Texas A&M		vs. Kansas (Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, Mo.)
NAVY			Ball State	Duke	Air Force		at Pitt (Wed., Oct. 10)	Wake Forest	Delaware	at Notre Dame	at North Texas	Northern Illinois	vs. Army (Sat., Dec. 1, M&T Bank Stadium, Baltimore) at Colorado (Fri., Nov. 23) at San Jose State Louisiana Tech (Sat., Dec. 1) UNLV
NEBRASKA	Nevada	at Wake Forest	USC	Ball State	Iowa State	at Missouri	Oklahoma State	Texas A&M	at Texas	at Kansas	Kansas State		
NEVADA	at Nebraska	at Northwestern	Nicholls State		UNLV	Fresno State	at Boise State (Sun., Oct. 14) at Wyoming	at Utah State	Idaho	at New Mexico State (Fri., Nov. 2) at TCU	Colorado State	Hawaii (Fri., Nov. 16) at Utah	
NEW MEXICO	at UTEP	New Mexico State	at Arizona	Sacramento State	BYU		at Louisiana Tech	at San Diego State	Air Force (Thurs., Oct. 25) at Hawaii				
NEW MEXICO STATE	SE Louisiana (Thurs., Aug. 30)	at New Mexico	UTEP	at Auburn	A&J-Pine Bluff	at Boise State (Sun., Oct. 7)	at Louisiana Tech	Idaho	at Wake Forest Virginia Middle Tennessee	Nevada (Fri., Nov. 2) Maryland at Miami	at San Jose State	Utah State	Fresno State (Fri., Nov. 30) Duke
NORTH CAROLINA N.C. STATE	James Madison UCF	at East Carolina at Boston College	Virginia Wofford	at South Florida Clemson Fla. Atlantic	at Virginia Tech Louisville at Arkansas	Miami at Florida State at La-Lafayette	South Carolina La-Monroe	at East Carolina at Troy	at Wake Forest Virginia Middle Tennessee		at N.C. State North Carolina Navy	at Georgia Tech at Wake Forest at Arkansas State (Thurs., Nov. 15) at Navy	at Georgia Tech at Wake Forest at Arkansas State (Thurs., Nov. 15) at Navy
NORTH TEXAS	at Oklahoma	at SMU			at Arkansas		Western Michigan	at Wisconsin	at Toledo		Kent State	at Navy	at Fla. International (Sat., Dec. 1) Ball State
NORTHERN ILLINOIS	vs. Iowa (Soldier Field, Chicago)	Southern Illinois	Eastern Michigan	Idaho	at Central Michigan	at Temple		vs. Eastern Michigan (Fri., Oct. 19, Ford Field, Detroit)	at Purdue	Iowa	Indiana	at Illinois	
NORTHWESTERN	Northeastern	Nevada	Duke	at Ohio State	Michigan	at Michigan State	Minnesota	at Wisconsin	at Purdue				
NOTRE DAME	Georgia Tech Gardner-Webb	at Penn State at La-Lafayette	at Michigan at Virginia Tech	Michigan State Wyoming	Purdue Kent State	at UCLA at Buffalo	Boston College Eastern Michigan	USC at Toledo	at Bowling Green	Navy Temple (Fri., Nov. 2) Wisconsin Texas A&M	Air Force at Akron (Wed., Nov. 7) Illinois Baylor	Duke	at Stanford Miami (Ohio)
OHIO STATE	Youngstown State North Texas	Akron Miami	at Washington Utah State	Northwestern at Tulsa (Fri., Sept. 21) Texas Tech	at Minnesota at Colorado	at Purdue vs. Texas (Cotton Bowl, Dallas) at Texas A&M	Kent State Missouri	Michigan State at Iowa State	at Penn State			at Michigan at Texas Tech	Oklahoma State
OKLAHOMA	at Georgia	Fla. Atlantic	at Troy (Fri., Sept. 14) Fresno State	Texas Tech	Sam Houston State	at Texas A&M	at Nebraska	Kansas State		Texas	Kansas	at Baylor	at Oklahoma
OKLAHOMA STATE	Houston	at Michigan		at Stanford	California		Washington State	at Washington	USC	Arizona State		at Arizona (Thurs., Nov. 15) at Washington State	at UCLA Oregon State (Sat., Dec. 1) at Oregon (Sat., Dec. 1)
OREGON	Utah (Thurs., Aug. 30)	at Cincinnati (Thurs., Sept. 6) Notre Dame Clemson	Idaho State	at Arizona State	UCLA	Arizona	at California	at Washington	Stanford		Washington	at Arizona (Thurs., Nov. 15) at Washington State	at UCLA Oregon State (Sat., Dec. 1) at Oregon (Sat., Dec. 1)
OREGON STATE													
PENN STATE													
PITT													
PURDUE													
RICE													
RUTGERS													
SAN DIEGO STATE													
SAN JOSE STATE													
SMU													
SOUTH CAROLINA													
SOUTH FLORIDA													

Team	Sept. 1	Sept. 8	Sept. 15	Sept. 22	Sept. 29	Oct. 6	Oct. 13	Oct. 20	Oct. 27	Nov. 3	Nov. 10	Nov. 17	Nov. 24
SOUTHERN MISS	Tennessee-Martin	at Tennessee	at East Carolina				SMU	at Marshall (Sun, Oct. 21)	UCF (Sun, Oct. 28) at Oregon State	at UAB	Memphis	at UTEP	Arkansas State
STANFORD	UCLA		San Jose State	Oregon	at Boise State (Thurs, Sept. 27) Arkansas State	Rice (Wed, Oct. 3) at USC	TCU	at Marshall (Sun, Oct. 21) at Arizona		Washington	at Washington State		Notre Dame California (Sat, Dec. 1) Cincinnati
SYRACUSE	Washington (Fri, Aug. 31) Baylor	at Iowa	Illinois	at Louisville	at Miami (Ohio)	West Virginia	Rutgers	Buffalo		at Pitt	South Florida	at Connecticut	
TCU		at Texas	at Air Force (Thurs, Sept. 13) at Connecticut	SMU	Colorado State	at Wyoming	at Stanford	Utah (Thurs, Oct. 18) Miami (Ohio)		New Mexico	at BYU (Thurs, Nov. 8)	UNLV	at San Diego State
TEMPLE	Navy (Fri, Aug. 31) at California	Buffalo	at Air Force (Thurs, Sept. 13) at Connecticut	at Bowling Green			at Alcorn			at Ohio (Fri, Nov. 2)	Penn State	Kent State	at Western Michigan
TENNESSEE		Southern Miss	at Florida	Arkansas State	Kansas State	Georgia	at Mississippi State	at Alabama	South Carolina	La-Lafayette	Arkansas	Vanderbilt	at Kentucky
TEXAS	Arkansas State	TCU	at UCF	Rice	Kansas State	vs. Oklahoma (Cotton Bowl, Dallas)	at Iowa State	at Baylor	Nebraska	at Oklahoma State	Texas Tech		at Texas A&M (Fri, Nov. 23)
TEXAS A&M	Montana State	Fresno State	La-Monroe	at Miami (Thurs, Sept. 20) at Oklahoma State	Baylor	Oklahoma State	at Texas Tech	at Nebraska	Kansas	at Oklahoma	at Missouri		Texas (Fri, Nov. 23)
TEXAS TECH	at SMU (Mon, Sept. 3) Purdue	UTEP	at Rice	Iowa State	Northwestern State	Iowa State	Texas A&M	at Missouri	Colorado	at Baylor	at Texas	Oklahoma	
TOLEDO		at Central Michigan	at Kansas	Iowa State	Western Michigan	Liberty	at Buffalo	Ohio	Northern Illinois	Eastern Michigan	at Ball State (Tues, Nov. 13) at Western Kentucky		at Bowling Green (Fri, Nov. 23)
TROY		at Florida	Oklahoma State (Fri, Sept. 14) Houston	at La-Lafayette	La-Monroe	at Fla. International		North Texas	at Arkansas State	at Georgia		Middle Tennessee (Tues, Nov. 20) at Rice	Fla. Atlantic (Sat, Dec. 1) at East Carolina
TULANE		Mississippi State	BYU	SE Louisiana	LSU	at Army at UTEP	at UAB	at SMU at UCF	Memphis SMU	Tulsa	UTEP	at Army	at Rice
TULSA	at La-Monroe (Thurs, Aug. 30) at Michigan State at N.C. State	at Florida State	Alcorn State Texas	Oklahoma (Fri, Sept. 21) Memphis	at Tulsa La-Lafayette	at Mississippi State at East Carolina	Tulane at South Florida	Houston Tulsa	at East Carolina at Southern Miss (Sun, Oct. 28)	Southern Miss Marshall	UCF	at Memphis at SMU	at Marshall UTEP
UAB	at Stanford	BYU	at Utah	Washington	at Oregon State	Notre Dame		California	at Washington State	at Arizona	Arizona State		Oregon at USC (Sat, Dec. 1) at New Mexico
UCF	at Utah State (Thurs, Aug. 30) Idaho	Wisconsin	Hawaii	Utah	at Nevada	at Air Force	BYU	Colorado State	at Wyoming	Oregon State	San Diego State	at TCU	at Arizona State (Thurs, Nov. 22) UCLA (Sat, Dec. 1)
UCLA			at Nebraska	Washington State	at Washington	Stanford	Arizona	at Notre Dame	at Oregon		California	New Mexico	at BYU
UTAH	at Oregon State (Thurs, Aug. 30) UNLV	Air Force	UCLA	at UNLV	Utah State	at Louisville (Fri, Oct. 5) at Hawaii	San Diego State	at TCU (Thurs, Oct. 18) Nevada	at Colorado State		Wyoming		
UTAH STATE		at Wyoming	at Oklahoma	San Jose State	at Utah		San Diego State		Louisiana Tech	at Fresno State	Boise State	at New Mexico State	at Idaho
UTEP	at Texas Tech (Thurs, Aug. 30) New Mexico	at Texas Tech	at New Mexico State	Texas Southern	at SMU	Tulsa	East Carolina	at South Carolina	Houston	at Rice	at Tulane	Southern Miss	at UCF
VANDERBILT	Richmond	Alabama	Mississippi	Texas Southern	Eastern Michigan	at Auburn	Georgia	at South Carolina	Miami (Ohio)	at Florida	Kentucky	at Tennessee	Wake Forest
VIRGINIA	at Wyoming	Duke	at North Carolina	Georgia Tech	Pitt	at Middle Tennessee	Connecticut	at Maryland	at N.C. State	Wake Forest	at Miami		Virginia Tech
VIRGINIA TECH	East Carolina	at LSU	Ohio	William & Mary	North Carolina	at Clemson	at Duke		Boston College (Thurs, Oct. 25) North Carolina	at Georgia Tech (Thurs, Nov. 1) at Virginia	Florida State	Miami	at Virginia
WAKE FOREST	at Boston College	Nebraska	Army	Maryland		at Duke	Florida State (Thurs, Oct. 11) at Arizona State	at Navy	North Carolina	at Clemson	at Clemson	N.C. State	at Vanderbilt
WASHINGTON	at Syracuse (Fri, Aug. 31) at Wisconsin	Boise State	Ohio State	at UCLA	USC		at Oregon	Oregon	Arizona	at Stanford	at Oregon State	California	Washington State at Hawaii (Sat, Dec. 1) at Washington
WASHINGTON STATE		vs. San Diego State (West Field, Seattle) at Marshall	Idaho	at USC	at Arizona	Arizona State		Mississippi State	UCLA	at California	Stanford	Oregon State	at Washington
WEST VIRGINIA	Western Michigan	Indiana	at Maryland (Thurs, Sept. 13) at Missouri	East Carolina	at South Florida (Fri, Sept. 28) at Toledo	at Syracuse	at Northern Illinois	Ball State	at Rutgers	Central Michigan (Tues, Nov. 6) at Ohio State	Louisville (Thurs, Nov. 8)	at Cincinnati	Connecticut Pitt (Sat, Dec. 1) Temple
WESTERN MICHIGAN	at West Virginia			Central Conn. State		Alcorn	at Penn State		at Eastern Michigan			at Iowa	
WISCONSIN	Washington State	at UNLV	The Citadel	Iowa	Michigan State	at Illinois	at Penn State	Northern Illinois	Indiana	at Ohio State	Michigan	at Minnesota	at Colorado State (Fri, Nov. 23)
WYOMING	Virginia	Utah State	at Boise State	at Ohio		TCU	New Mexico	at Air Force	UNLV	at San Diego State	Utah	BYU	

*12th game TBA

Conferences

SEC.....22	Clemson.....100	Miami.....106	SMU.....163
Big Ten.....50	Colorado.....80	Miami (Ohio).....166	South Carolina.....32
Big 12.....70	Colorado State.....151	Michigan.....54	South Florida.....140
ACC.....92	Connecticut.....144	Michigan State.....67	Southern Miss.....160
Pac-10.....112	Duke.....111	Middle Tennessee.....173	Stanford.....129
Big East.....130	East Carolina.....161	Minnesota.....65	Syracuse.....145
Mountain West.....146	Eastern Michigan.....169	Mississippi.....46	TCU.....148
WAC.....152	Florida.....26	Mississippi State.....48	Temple.....167
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Sun Belt.....170	Florida State.....96	N.C. State.....103	Texas A&M.....88
Independents.....174	Fresno State.....156	Nebraska.....74	Texas Tech.....87
Teams	Georgia.....28	Nevada.....156	Toledo.....169
Air Force.....151	Georgia Tech.....108	New Mexico.....150	Troy.....172
Akron.....167	Hawaii.....155	New Mexico State.....157	Tulane.....163
Alabama.....42	Houston.....162	North Carolina.....110	Tulsa.....163
Arizona.....126	Idaho.....157	North Texas.....173	UAB.....161
Arizona State.....124	Illinois.....66	Northwestern.....169	UCF.....161
Arkansas.....44	Indiana.....68	Notre Dame.....174	UCLA.....118
Arkansas State.....172	Iowa.....62	Ohio.....166	UNLV.....151
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Auburn.....40	Kansas.....79	Oklahoma.....85	Utah.....150
Ball State.....168	Kansas State.....78	Oklahoma State.....90	Utah State.....157
Baylor.....91	Kent State.....167	Oregon.....125	UTEP.....163
Boise State.....154	Kentucky.....34	Oregon State.....122	Vanderbilt.....36
Boston College.....98	Louisiana-Lafayette.....173	Penn State.....58	Virginia.....109
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Buffalo.....167	Louisiana Tech.....157	Purdue.....64	Wake Forest.....101
BYU.....149	Louisville.....136	Rice.....163	Washington.....128
California.....120	LSU.....38	Rutgers.....138	Washington State.....127
Central Michigan.....169	Marshall.....161	San Diego State.....151	West Virginia.....134
Cincinnati.....143	Maryland.....102	San Jose State.....157	Western Michigan.....168
	Memphis.....161		Wisconsin.....56
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Contributing writers

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